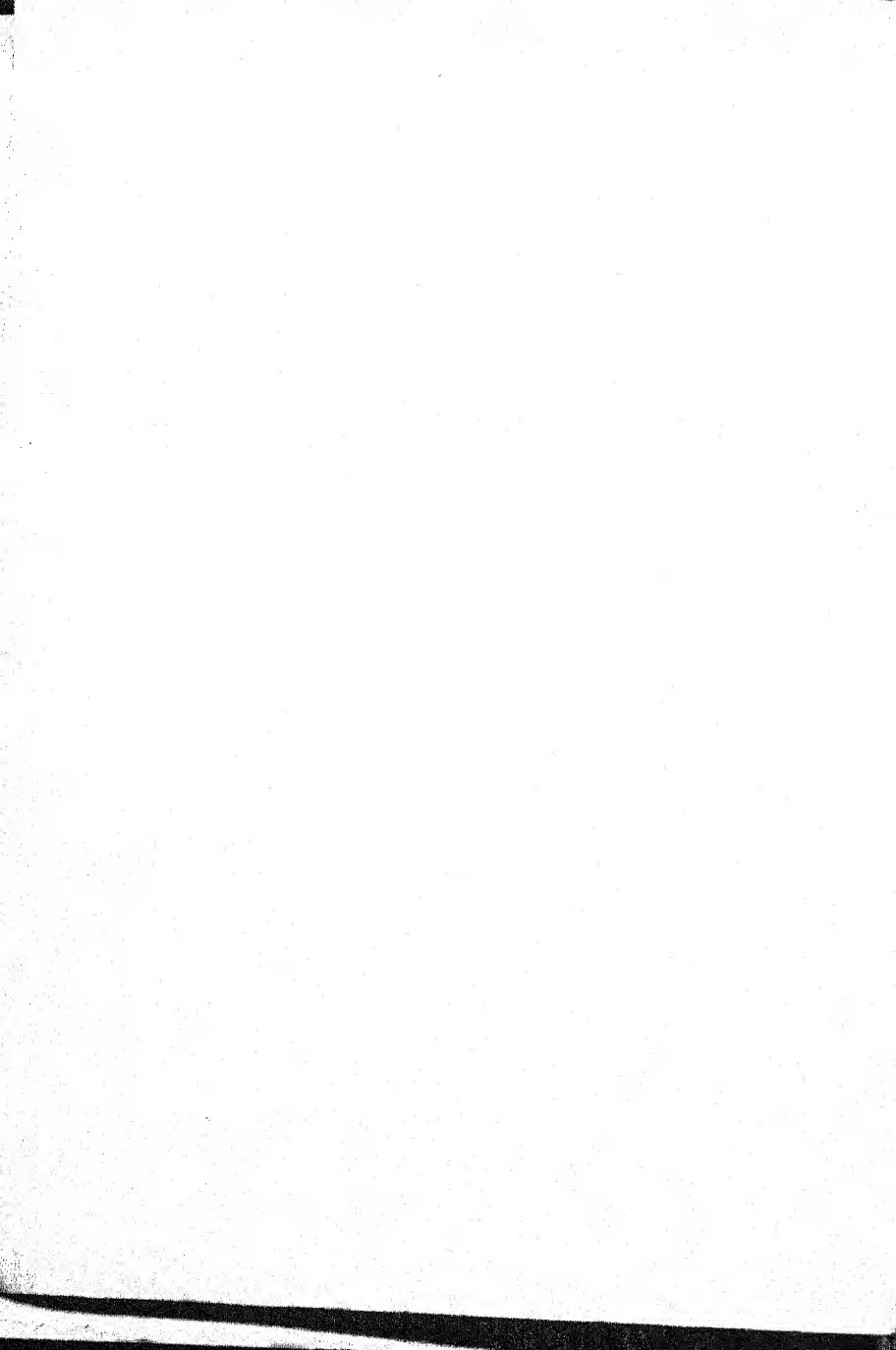


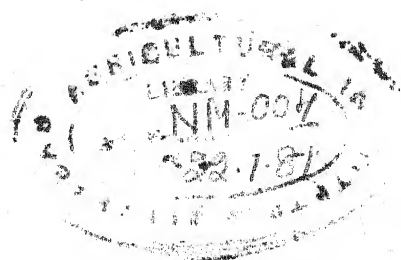
The Value of Life

by
John D. Jess

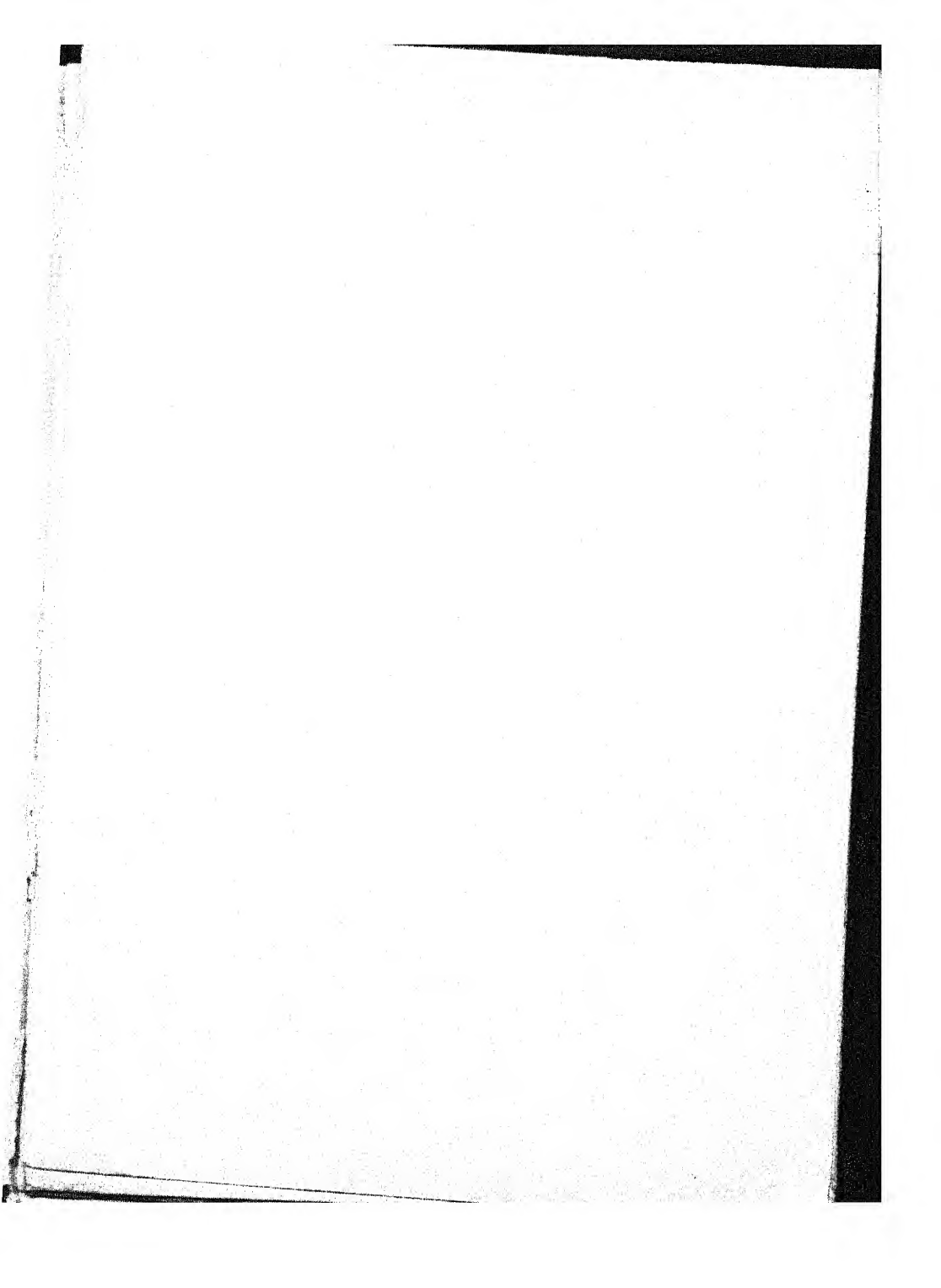
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Foreword

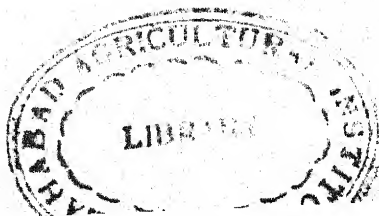
It is a privilege to be asked to write a foreword to this book; for I am constantly rejoicing in the wonderful work of The Chapel of the Air.

One night not long ago I flipped on my bedside radio and unexpectedly came across an unusual message that stirred me deeply. At its conclusion I learned that I had been listening to The Chapel of the Air, a ministry I had known about for many years, and prayed for, but had never before listened to. The half had not been told me!

As you read the messages in this book, already heard by scores of thousands, may you be blessed afresh and then pass on this book to others.

Kenneth N. Taylor

Author LIVING LETTERS
LIVING PROPHECIES
LIVING GOSPELS



Author's Foreword

It scares the wits out of me to see my sermons in print. Embarrasses me, too. For I am fundamentally (no pun intended) a preacher, not a journalist. Moreover, a sermon loses a lot of its punch on paper.

But my associates insist people will benefit from reading these radio messages. I hope they are right.

While these sermons are not evangelistic *per se*, I would not like to think they are altogether lacking in convicting and converting influence.

"I Agree With God" is a potpourri of related data and personal opinions selected for their contemporary approach to age-old questions and problems as well as a coherent reflection of a much Higher Authority.

Bear in mind the foregoing and it may enhance your enjoyment of my humble efforts.

John D. Jess
Wheaton, Illinois
December, 1967

will ever know the origin of the universe, basically because we are restricted to a possibly three- or four-dimensional world." He suggests that there may be another dimension, a spiritual one, which we cannot comprehend.

There are many things we could comprehend if they were "laid on the line," so to speak. We can know, for example, that there is nothing in the first chapter of Genesis that refutes or contradicts the known facts of science. I am aware that there are some *claims* in scientific circles that *appear* to discredit the Bible with respect to origins, but they normally reveal only the misinformation held by the contender.

All science has up to this time are theories (educated guesses) concerning the earth's beginning. There are some things that are well enough established to give us an idea of what the earth was like long years ago. It was probably superheated, although not a star. It is not large enough to have been a star. A star must have a mass greater than 1/100th part of the mass of our sun before it can go through what is called "the stellar sequence," or the process necessary for a star to form. Since the mass of the earth is only 1/333,000th part of the mass of the sun, it could not have been a star.

The Bible says the earth was originally "without form, and void." Those who have carefully studied the original Hebrew manuscripts tell us that a good translation of this verse would be: "And the earth was shapeless, very rare (not closely compacted together), and darkness dwelt upon its face. It was of unmeasurable magnitude, and in great commotion."

The Order of Creation

PART I

Not long ago I received a letter from a university senior who is majoring in physics. It was both interesting and gratifying. I want you to notice something he said which verifies what you have heard me say repeatedly, namely, that the students in most of our educational institutions are not given the facts about evolution; that is, that it is only a theory not a proven fact.

Note this paragraph from the young man's letter: "A couple of months ago you gave a few messages on the theory of evolution. Until that time it never occurred to me that it was just a theory, and not a strong one at that."

Here is a young man who has had almost sixteen years of schooling, but who reveals that he has never been told that evolution is a theory only. He has accepted it all these years as a fact. Why? For the simple reason that *it is being taught as a fact*. Direct creation is not even suggested as an alternative viewpoint. This is the sorry, the unfair, aspect of modern education. It does not give today's student a choice. It rules out God, in other words.

This university senior makes another statement I want to share with you, and which I shall discuss at some length. He says, "I don't believe that men

Now is there anything known to astronomy that approximates this description? Yes, there is. It is known as a dark, or diffuse, nebula. When we first began to photograph the heavens through powerful and sophisticated telescopes, it was discovered that the dark places in a star-spangled sky, previously thought to be just open spaces devoid of stars, proved to be what are called "dark nebulae." These are clouds of dark material, so dense they hide the stars located beyond them. The fact is, dark nebulae are more prevalent than any other type of astronomical object except stars. They are seen and photographed in many sizes and shapes.

Practically every theory concerning the formation of our solar system assumes that it started from some kind of diffuse nebula; in fact, Dr. Fred Whipple of Harvard University and Dr. George P. Kuiper of the University of Chicago both have theories concerning the origin of the solar system—theories well received by the scientific world—and they assume an origin from a *diffuse nebula*! Also, Henry Norris Russell, in his book, *THE SOLAR SYSTEM AND ITS ORIGIN*, discusses the possibility of our solar system coming from a diffuse (dark) nebula.

If you have studied photographs of diffuse nebulae, as I have, you will agree that Moses could not have used more articulate language in describing them. It could very well be, then, that the earth and other planets were indeed formed from these masses of dark objects that float around in space, so large many of them blot out huge sections of the heavens until the stars beyond them are obscured.

Now please understand that I am not insisting that creation must be explained "scientifically." I

am not saying that God created the earth in a certain way, or under specified conditions. What I want to underscore is that Moses could well have been describing the diffuse nebula, which all astronomers now know exists in space, when he wrote, "And the earth was without form, and void . . ." (Gen. 1:2). As for the "beginning" alluded to in verse 1, this could have been the millions or billions of years ago the scientists insist upon. There is nothing in the earth's antiquity that argues with Genesis.

Now you will notice as you study the first chapter of Genesis, that Moses describes certain events as having transpired in God's creative handiwork, and these events are listed in the order in which they occurred. We have already seen that God created the heavens and the earth "in the beginning," whenever that may have been. Since God always was—is from everlasting to everlasting—this can be as many billions or trillions of years ago as the theorizers wish to project.

God's next act, after commencing to fit the earth up for man, was to, as the King James Version renders it, "move upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). Prior to this we find that "darkness was upon the face of the deep," the deep meaning the water which obviously covered the earth at that time. A better translation of this would be, "And the Spirit of God *brooded* over the face of the waters." The word "brooded" here suggests a dove brooding on her eggs, or an eagle beating her wings over her nest to drive off an enemy and protect her young. God gently "brooded" on the face of the waters, protecting elementary life.

Every school book dealing with the origin of life, including those that propagate the evolutionary theory, tells us that life in its primitive forms began in the sea. Well, Genesis agrees with that!

After God selected the earth for His eternal plan, He said, "Let there be light." The earth was shrouded in darkness—perpetual darkness—darkness in which no life could exist. Just how God accomplished the giving of light we are not told. He may have merely moved the earth into closer proximity to a sun that already existed—or He may have created our sun and placed it in its present location. This would not be difficult to believe; He has made trillions of suns, and it has yet to be proved that He did not place every single one of them exactly where it now is. Surely there is some design, some control, or else they would all bump into each other as they whirl and burn and recede in space.

Next God made the firmament (or space) and "divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament" (v. 7). What does this mean? Well, we are told there were vast deposits of water on the earth. It may have been that the earth was hot enough at that time to send huge clouds of steam into the air, thus creating what might be described as a solid encasement of dense clouds, so imporous that life could not exist. These vast areas of suspended water merged with the oceans (or ocean) on the earth. So God made an air space between the two bodies of water—a necessity, as we know, for the sustenance of life.

That the earth at that time was totally submerged in water is borne out in verse 9 where we read, "And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place." Most geologists agree that at one time the earth was indeed wholly inundated.

In the same verse God commands the dry land

to appear. Geologists are far from agreed as to how the continents emerged, but most agree that in its earliest geological ages the surface was quite smooth and of nearly uniform height. Due to some cataclysmic action—undoubtedly by an act of the Great Engineer—parts of the planet rose above others as God brought dry land out of the earth-encompassing waters.

Thus far, you have probably noticed, we have encountered nothing in the Genesis account that in any way contradicts the known facts of science, and this despite the fact that many teachers (not all, of course) declare that science and the Bible are incompatible. As we proceed in this same theme, we will see the amazing accuracy of Moses' account of the order in which living things appeared, giving ample evidence of knowledge far beyond anything then known in the scientific, astronomical, and philosophical circles of his day.

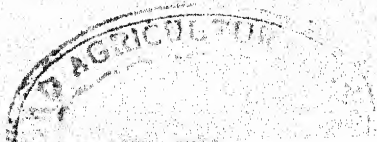
The Order of Creation

PART II

We have seen that there is nothing in the Bible's account of the original creation of the earth that contests the known facts of science; also that the appearance of light, the dividing of the waters on earth from those in the atmosphere, the inundation of the entire earth with water at one time, and the appearance of dry land, are all in accordance with the known facts of geology. Now we shall look at the succeeding acts of creation as recorded in the first chapter of Genesis and see if they are out of harmony with the facts (not theories) of science.

After the dry land appeared (v. 9), Moses says God created vegetation. "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind" (v. 11).

Why, do you suppose, did God Create vegetation before animal life? Any accredited scientist—or high school student, for that matter—can answer that. The science of chemistry has established that before there can be life-sustaining oxygen in the atmosphere, there must be a multiplicity of plants to replenish the supply. Were it not for the part vegetation plays in providing oxygen to breathe, this vital substance would rapidly combine with the rocks and metals of the earth's surface and deplete the atmosphere. Thus, before there could be sufficient oxygen in the air to support life, it was neces-



sary to have plant life. How did Moses know this? Do you think he just guessed it? I don't. He could not possibly have known that plants had to precede animals—unless he learned it from a divine source.

After God created plant life, He caused breaks to appear in the clouded sky to allow the sun to shine through. I know the King James Version says He "made" two great lights, the sun and the moon, but as we are advised in the margin of the Scofield Bible (and with this all reliable scholars concur), the word does not imply a creative act, but rather declares a function.

This passage, I know, has been the object of many critical remarks against the Bible. It has been said the Bible could not be true, for it places vegetation *before* the sun. Knowing as we do that vegetation cannot grow without heat and light, the assumption has flourished that Moses got mixed up; that here he really "goofed."

Notice again, however, that the word here is "made," not *created*. We have the account of the *creation* of the sun and moon in verse 1, while here God causes the sun to shine upon the earth. Remember, up to this point the earth was covered completely with dense clouds. They were so heavy it was impossible to tell the time of day, the season of the year, or any other sign we read from the sun today. So God, in order to make the sun function as it now does (and for which we should all be thankful!), separated the clouds and let the sun shine through.

Before this, however, there was considerable internal heat on the earth. Heat is necessary to the formation of clouds, for it keeps the water suspended in the atmosphere. Before God rolled back the clouds, as here described, the earth was like a hot-

house. The globe-encircling clouds scattered the sun's rays preventing them from scorching the vegetation, like the semi-opaque glass over a greenhouse. The heat from the interior of the earth kept things quite warm, and vegetation flourished. So the critics can stop laughing at Moses' chronological account of vegetation before the sun. He was no fool nor did God make any mistakes when He inspired him to record His creative acts.

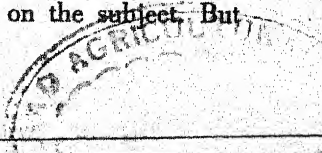
Next God created fish, marine life. Verse 21 says He "created great whales (sea monsters) and every living creature that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly." Nothing revealed by science discredits the appearance of marine life after the events we have just studied. In fact, I have before me a geological time scale showing the order of creation as compiled by geologists, and most forms of life in the various time periods they list come out in this precise order.

The Genesis account next lists the creation of birds . . . "every winged fowl after his kind" (v. 21). Then came the mammals: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth." Geology agrees that mammals made their appearance after birds. Genesis agrees with this.

These, then, are the events said to have preceded man's creation. Surely nothing in the Genesis account contradicts the known facts of science. And again I emphasize *findings*, not theories.

In the geological time scale before me, I find that man is indeed the last form of life to appear. Why didn't Moses, if he just imagined all this, make man appear first? That's what you or I would have done had we made up a story of creation without benefit of scientific literature on the subject. But

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Moses wasn't dreaming when he set forth these creation events in their proper sequence. He was listening to the voice of the Creator!

Someone may say, "Perhaps Moses got his ideas from the schools of Egypt where he was educated." Wait a minute. We know what was taught by the Egyptians; we have their tablets of stone with the record of creation as they believed it. And while in some areas it is similar to that of the Bible, it disagrees on most points. And it disagrees drastically with present scientific information. So neither Moses—nor any of his contemporaries—could have obtained this notion from the Egyptians.

Someone says, "Then maybe he got them from the schools of Babylon." The answer to that is an emphatic "No." We know today what was taught in Babylon concerning creation, and it is so ridiculous it doesn't even merit repeating. Suffice to say that today's school child, in his wildest flights of fancy, would not conjure up a story matching that of the Babylonians. Genesis bears no resemblance to the theories of creation held by the Babylonians.

If you say they came from some other civilization, I can only reply that there is no evidence in any of the world's libraries that any ancient civilization held to the account of creation as given in the first chapter of Genesis.

There are those who would shrug off Moses' accuracy by suggesting that he made a lucky guess. A lucky guess? Remember, there are thirteen items contained in the creation account. The probability of Moses guessing all thirteen of these in their correct order is one in 311,351,040! Do you want to go for that?

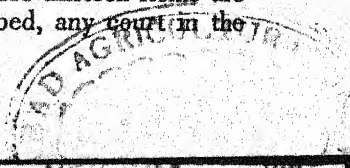
What did Moses know about dark nebulae so as to write a perfect description of one in the second

verse? Why, we didn't know about them ourselves until about 45 years ago! How did he know the earth was once covered with water, or that it was completely covered with clouds? How did he know that life first existed in the sea? How did he know that rain began on the earth between the introduction of plants and the creation of fish? Today historical geology confirms all this.

There is but one explanation to the open mind, the mind uncluttered with modern skepticism and dogged unwillingness to believe anything the Bible has to say, and it's that *God* inspired Moses to write Genesis. The apostle Paul tells us in II Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is inspired by God, and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in doing what is right" (Wms. Trans.).

I say it is impossible to possess an unbiased mind and still insist that Moses stumbled onto the correct order of things by haphazard guesswork.

Suppose I tell you that it was I who built a certain old house, but since I had no witnesses, no one believes me. How do I go about proving that I did build it? Well, I could describe a number of things that happened in the building of it that no one else could know about. I could say, "When the cement for the east foundation was being poured, I dropped an old nailset in it, about a foot and a half from the northeast corner. In the southwest corner you'll find a length of barbed wire that accidentally fell into the cement when the foundation was being poured. Moreover, I used 2 x 8 floor joists instead of the customary 2 x 6." And so I go on to recite a total of thirteen things you can expect to find in that house when it is torn down. If, when the house is razed, these thirteen items are discovered exactly as I described, any court in the



world would agree I was there when that house was built.

So with respect to the chronological order of events in creation as described by Moses in the first chapter of Genesis. Although they were written thousands of years before science had any information about them, factual science has proved them correct. I therefore believe God gave us just such an account so that in these latter days, when science had reached its present state of development, we would have a verification of the Bible's authenticity, being able to know for a certainty that God created the planet upon which we live, and that He placed life—and us—upon it.

What greater proof do we need that the Bible is God's Book and that He inspired it?

The Value of Life

Are you aware that the phrase, "bundle of life," comes from the Bible?

Did you know that when you look down upon a tiny baby and say, "What a cute little bundle of life," you are using the terminology Abigail used in her entreaty to David in the 25th chapter of I Samuel: "The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God" (v. 29).

What an expressive phrase! When we think of a bundle, a diversity of things come to mind. A man who makes a lucky investment is said to have "made a bundle." Some synonyms of the word include cluster, clump, batch, gathering, collection, group, lot, concentration, muster, heap, assemblage, assortment. There are bundles of old clothing, almost worthless; there are bundles of old rags and papers destined for the incinerator. And yet not all bundles are worthless. Some are of great value, the loss of which would result in consternation and despair to the sender or consignee.

In the verse just quoted, *life* is referred to as a bundle. Without question it is one of the most precious of all packages. What hopes, energies, ambitions, memories, disappointments and potentialities are bound up in it! Think back over the "bundle" which is your own life and you'll find myriad memories crowding in upon you—memories of pain and



convalescence; memories of hopes fulfilled and hopes dashed; memories of prosperity and loss; memories of victory and defeat. What a "bundle" of recollections the memory is capable of assembling.

Have you ever stopped to ponder just what a wonderful parcel life really is? What an astounding diversity of gifts and potentialities God has incorporated into human life. In each of us there is the power to think, to work, to love, to relax, to judge, to conquer. Just thinking about it staggers the mind!

I often marvel at how carefully, how ingeniously, God put together this parcel of life. The world is filled with wonders, not the least of which are the wonders of the human body, but I'm thinking now of an even greater wonder. It is the person who can work with this body, administer medicine to it, operate on it, dissect and analyze it, and then deny it is the work of a Master Craftsman. David was not a physician, but listen to the wisdom and humility in this statement:

"When I observe Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou has established: what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou carest for him? Yet Thou has made him little less than heavenly beings, and Thou dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou has given him dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou has placed all things under his feet" (Psa. 8:3-6, Berkley).

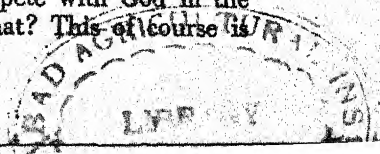
"Your body," says Dr. Peter J. Steincrohn, "is the world's most incredible piece of machinery. It manufactures, improves and repairs itself. It has illimitable reserves." Yes, the "bundle of life" is an amazing thing, not just because of what it consists, but because of what it can do without. The

average man can get along without a gall bladder, spleen, tonsils, and appendix. He can dispense with one lung, one kidney, two-fifths of his liver, part of his brain, most of his stomach, both eyes, ears, arms and legs—and still live!

Who but a consummate genius could contrive a human body and run it on the mysterious substance we call blood? We run automobiles on gasoline, jetliners on kerosene, locomotives on diesel fuel or steam. But the human body runs on a fluid not nearly as uncomplicated as it was once thought to be. Modern research has revealed blood to consist of so highly complicated a substance that man cannot reproduce it, or find a substitute for it. To reproduce a pint of human blood, you would have to incorporate in it seventy different proteins, red cells, white cells, plasma, and antibodies effective against infection, at least ten substances involved in clotting, twenty different enzymes, fat-containing proteins, carbohydrate-containing proteins, metal-containing proteins albumins, and probably other still unidentified substances.

You would have to make it capable of transporting oxygen from the lungs to all the cells of the body; capable of carrying food elements (glucose, amino acids, proteins, fats, etc.) from the alimentary canal to the cells. It would also have to be capable of carrying hormones, the ductless gland secretions that regulate many important functions of the body. Your blood would have to be capable of maintaining a more or less constant temperature in the body, play an important part in resistance to disease and, in the words of a blood specialist, "maintain its own composition and integrity."

Are you prepared to compete with God in the making of a "bundle" like that? This of course is



an infinitesimal part of the total wonder of the human body. In recognition of this, the Psalmist, overwhelmed by the astonishment of it, said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" (Psa. 139:14).

We speak of the *brevity* of human life—but have you ever pondered the amazing *longevity* of man? One may expect a modern automobile to last a few years and run a few thousand miles; but what enlightened person would expect an automobile to keep running, without ever being turned off, for sixty, seventy, eighty—or even a hundred—years? God builds that kind of "mileage" into a machine that starts and stops so mysteriously the most learned of men cannot determine what activates the first heartbeat, or why it culminates in ultimate dissolution. We have learned to forestall the ultimate end with ingenious methods of repair and substitution, but science does not understand, nor can it cope with, the aging process. God, it seems, is the only One who can "wind us up," and He has not (and I suspect, will not) share His knowledge concerning life and death. He has said, "It is appointed unto man once to die, (and) after this the judgment." Only He can put together the bundle of life—and release it.

Man is an ingenious bundle indeed, but bundles sometimes become lost. You have surely had the experience of sending someone a package that never reached him. Some burst open; others are undeliverable because of illegible addresses; still others are missent. So each year the post office must devise means of disposing of packages that, for one reason or other, cannot reach their intended destination.

When God put together the bundle of your life, He directed it toward heaven. That is your intended destination; it is God's preference for you. He

is bitterly disappointed when one of His carefully constructed, highly prized "packages" is lost in transit. Yet millions are. But it is not because they are poorly labeled or improperly wrapped for the journey. It is because the package, in possession of powers permitting it to determine its own destiny, deliberately sidetracks itself and refuses to allow itself to arrive at its intended destination. I have seen many of these sidetracked bundles, and so have you. I have seen them in varying stages of disarray, wrappings soiled and tattered, limping or staggering along Skid Row, exuding evidence of self-misdirection and gross noncompliance with the Sender's wishes and directives. I have also seen them with wrappings and bindings intact, appearing none the worse for the rigors of the journey, but going west when their intended destination lies to the east; going downward with destination upward. A package need not be crushed or become untied to fail its mission. It need only arrive at the wrong address. It need only be waylaid or misdirected.

You and I are God's "bundles of life." We came into this world "packaged" for delivery to His eternal Eden. We were launched on the journey with full capabilities for the journey; with every faculty and incentive to enable us to reach heaven unsullied and unharmed. If we become shattered and confused along the way, it is not the fault of God's divine delivery system. It is the deliberate choosing of the "bundle." It is a repetition of the drama enacted in the Garden of Eden concerning which it is recorded, "The woman saw the tree as being good for food, delightful to the eye and a tree desirable to render one wise, so she took of its fruit and ate; she also gave to her husband, who ate with her" (Gen. 3:6, Berkley).



These were the first two bundles of human flesh God "mailed"—but how soon they were to willfully misdirect themselves and, by acts of their will, thwart God's eternal purposes for them! Thus far I have mentioned only what happens when the bundle itself undertakes to deliver itself safely. Now I would tell you that the Sender of the bundle of life is wonderfully able, and generously willing, to protect it from its point of origin to its final glorious destination! By invitation, He is as close to the bundle of life as man's soul is close to his spirit. When, as we journey to our intended destination, we are tempted to stray; when the problem of survival becomes so great we cannot solve it on a personal basis; when we are overwhelmed by frustrations and physical distresses—then we need only reach out by faith and touch the Master Shipper who is always close by and who is always keenly intent on protecting His investment.

If a shipment goes astray, it does not represent the will of the Divine Dispatcher. He wills that each of us be "bound in the bundle of life with the Lord our God!"

Do you appreciate the inestimable value of life's bundle? Will you apply your mind to the appreciation of all that is involved in God's great gift? Then see that *your* life is bound up in nothing mean, nothing vindictive, nothing mercenary. Make sure the label is not defaced; that the destination tag is intact and unmistakable.

As one of God's good and wonderful "bundles," make sure you are "bound up" with Him—"with the Lord thy God!"

Who Jesus Is

You may have heard about the little girl who was frightened as she lay in her darkened bedroom after "lights out." Calling to her mother, she expressed her fears. Her mother replied, "You need not worry, honey, God is with you and He will protect you."

The little one replied, "Yes, mother, but I want someone with a face."

What she wanted was *reality*—something everyone wants in the religious realm. Human nature responds to tangibles which it associates with reality. Therefore the question: Is the God of the Christian ethereal? Is He unknowable? Many, it would seem, have come to this conclusion.

There is nothing wrong with wanting a "*someone*" instead of a *something* to provide assurance when it comes to God. It is both an intelligent and a natural desire. Yet the Almighty has elected to make Himself known to us through the element of faith. Later, we are promised, faith will be replaced by sight.

One of the primary factors in making the Christian ministry difficult is God's invisibility. It leads to wild speculation and broad theorization. And because God cannot be known apart from His Son, who is the express image of His Father according to Hebrews 1:3, any religionist who does

not know Christ cannot know God. If this sounds elementary, it's because it is!

The little girl to whom I referred wanted a God with a face. She had a right to such a God. There are too many faceless gods in our world.

But how can we have a God with a face? Doesn't the Bible say, "No man hath seen God at any time"? Is not the Christian's God faceless? How does one get beyond the *theory* stage in his concept of Him?

The answer is simple. God gave Himself a face, a form, a personality and character that momentous night in Bethlehem long ago when The Word became flesh! You say you want a God with a face? Look at Jesus Christ!

But how does Jesus look, we are asked? You will find hundreds of pages devoted to Him in the Book called the Bible. It is the only completely authoritative work on Christ in existence. If we want to know about Abraham Lincoln, we read the works of an acceptable biographer. The same holds true of any personality with whom we desire to acquaint ourselves. Soon there emerges a man with a "face." He moves out of the theoretical stage into reality.

Now if you have God in theory only, you have no God at all. The human mind is perhaps the most fertile thing in existence. No two persons, seeing the same incident, report it identically. Turn man's imagination loose on theories about God, and you have—well, you have what we *do* have—a potpourri of disconnected, unrelated, outlandish concepts that create more problems than they settle.

I like what Richard Halverson said about Jesus Christ: He is "God in focus." I don't think anyone can improve on that. Look at Christ and you will know exactly how God thinks, how He acts, and

what His attitude is toward man, sin, punishment, reward—*everything*. Leave Christ out and you know nothing about God. Nothing! And this, I am afraid, is what most men know about Him: nothing. This fact stands out clearly as we talk about Him to others. Most people know nothing about God, for they know nothing about His Son. If men knew God through Christ, they would not use Their holy names in derision as they do.

Let me say something else about this system of getting to know God: it stands up under scrutiny. Jesus Christ has nothing to fear from those who investigate honestly. When men won't investigate, they get contorted ideas about God.

I am amused when people tell me, after seeing me in person, how surprised (and I suppose disappointed) they are to see "the voice." As you listen to a radio personality, you form a mental image of him. It may be involuntary but it's unavoidable. The individual seldom looks as you imagined him.

If I have heard it once, I've heard it three hundred times: "Oh, I pictured you a tall, thin man." I don't know if this should gladden or sadden me, but for the benefit (or disillusionment) of you who have never seen me, I am *not* tall and thin, although it isn't a bad idea. I am 5 feet, 11 inches tall, and weigh 195 pounds. I wish I could report more intriguing vital statistics, but I cannot and be truthful. I have never been taller, but I've been heavier. Fortunately I'm shedding a few extra pounds—but please don't send me your diet. I know all about calories, proteins, carbohydrates, nutrients, et cetera. I love the study of calories; in fact, I love calories—period! Therein lies the problem!

Well, now you won't have to theorize as before. Some of you now know me better than you did.

But you can know God more intimately and personally than you will ever know me, for I could not acquaint you as thoroughly with John Jess as the Holy Spirit has acquainted us with God through the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, and the epistles to the churches. If you want a God with a face, familiarize yourself with the New Testament. You may not find God as you want Him but you'll find Him as He is.

I don't know how you picture me from the physical standpoint as you hear my voice but I can tell you what you have the right to expect of me as to my character—whether I am seven feet tall and weigh a hundred pounds or four-by-four and weigh two hundred. I have a solemn obligation to be what I preach, and none of this “Do as I say and not as I do” monkey business. Regardless of how fiercely you may defend certain practices that are questionable, you would not expect to see me smoke, or drink, or bet on the horses, or support a Communist cause. These are things—among many others—that do not fit the Christian image.

Now when you think of God, it is vital that you think in terms of everything His name and position reflect—Love, Mercy, Perfection, the obligation to reward good and punish evil. *This* is the face of God! It is centralized in the Person of Christ. Jesus is God's *reflection*. Because this is so, the apostle John wrote: “That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands . . . we proclaim also to you so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1-3).

This, neighbor, is the way God looks and the way He is. Do you know Him?

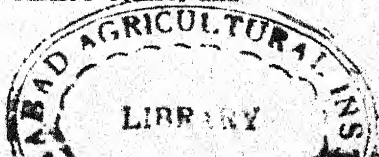
The Mind of Man

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."—
Prov. 23:7.

I want to discuss with you a seldom-mentioned aid to successful Christian living—or successful living, *period*. It involves the use of our minds.

A great deal has been written and said about the power of the mind. More than one religion has been founded on the concept that evil and disease exist only in the mind, and that when we learn to exercise perfect control over the mind, these problems will cease to exist. While I am strongly opposed in my own thinking and doctrinal concepts to any religion that relegates such responsibility and religious significance to the mind, it is nevertheless true that extraordinary powers are latent in our mental processes. Just because we are Christians and believe the Bible does not make this any the less true, nor should we be ignorant of the importance the Word of God attaches to a carefully guarded control of the mind.

I am confident that the greatest single cause of spiritual indolence and failure lies in an area that we ourselves can, if we will, control. I cannot tell you just why, but I know that God places the full responsibility for our thought-life upon us. We are free to dwell upon whatever we choose. A Christian may take his thoughts out of Christ's control and



thus invalidate himself as an effective witness, or conceivably disgrace himself and the cause of the Gospel.

Much of my mail reveals that few of us have learned to master our thought-processes, with the result that spiritual defeat becomes a pattern for life. Unfortunately—and I cannot say whether we preachers are to blame for this or not—many apparently receive Christ as Saviour with the concept that He sweeps the mind clean of everything undesirable, then pursues a twenty-four-hour-a-day clean-up program on His own, without aid from us. That this is not true, many of you have learned through bitter defeat and a substandard Christian life.

When people tell me of their intense fears and bitter feelings and fierce doubts, I normally recommend to them Isaiah 26:3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." It is a simple deduction that when our minds are occupied with Christ, we will not be overtaken by worries related to life's mundane matters. It is true, with very few exceptions, that people who become famous in a particular field or vocation reach that plane by means of relentless concentration, rigorous practice and inflexible dedication. It is also true that most of us have greater talents and aptitudes for one thing than for another, but that the top rung of success's ladder is never reached in one bound. All a man has must be appropriated and consecrated toward the one end.

If this is true in the world of politics, science, entertainment, and the like, you may be sure it is equally so in the spiritual realm. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he!"

A well-known minister has said, "Our battles

with sin are largely fought in the mind," and he is right. I might add, we have two strikes on us before we begin to get our thoughts under control. One strike is the human aptitude for sin (the weakness of the flesh) and the other, of course, is the "prince of the power of the air," as the Bible so aptly describes Satan. (Eph. 2:2).

We know there is a central control system at a busy airport which keeps all the planes from trying to take off or land at the same time. It is what we call a control tower. To the men of genius in these towers is relegated the authority to govern the conduct of this traffic so there will be a system and conformity and order on the ground and in the air. Remove these control centers, and the result would be too disastrous to contemplate.

Now the mind is the "control tower" of our lives. Some theologians may argue this point, insisting it to be the heart, not the mind, that determines one's actions; but without desiring to become argumentative or technical, I think the mind has the final say. The Bible speaks of many things in the heart—elements that are responsible for what we are, namely, sinners—but it is the mind, governed by Jesus Christ, that sifts and sorts out the characteristics that come to the surface and manifest themselves in our lives.

It would be wrong to say that the basic inclination of the human heart is removed at conversion. If the heart were swept clean and all evil expunged, a Christian could not fall into sin, for its very root would have been removed. The fact that the Christian wages a relentless battle against evil indicates that the old nature remains, and that it is only as we allow Christ to subjugate through His indwelling presence and through the channel of the mind, these

wanton desires, that we are able to overcome.

If it is true that the mind controls the life, you therefore see how vastly important it is to be completely taken up with Him.

Many a degenerate mind is carefully concealed by an innocent face and pleasing manner. We have read of the criminal in New York City who attacked a woman with a knife within sight and sound of more than thirty neighbors, stabbing her to death while none interfered. It was subsequently revealed that the man responsible for that crime led a double life, the revelation of which not only surprised his friends, but the members of his immediate family as well. By day he was an efficient computer operator; by night a beast, on the prowl for human blood. Such a man spent his days dwelling on things fiendish and his nights carrying them out.

If I had the time and were so disposed, I could carry this theme on into many facets of our daily lives. Doctors tell us that a great many of our physical ailments are mental, and that a person may become sick, or recover from what to him seems a very real illness, simply by changing his mental attitudes. I read of a doctor who conducted a test. He ordered medicine for all the patients in a large ward. Later he went back, telling them he had made a mistake; that what he prescribed would make them all sick. Within fifteen minutes all but two of the patients were vomiting. The pills were only sugar and water!

It has been estimated that the great percentage of mental and emotional problems stem from a negative type of thinking; that most of us could do much more and better if we only believed we could. An alert mind can make a ninety-year-old person nimble and quick-witted, while a lazy mind can

make a much younger person think he has one foot in the grave.

The Bible bears out this principle. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Here is the "I can" principle at work, only it goes a step further—and a mighty important step—for only a fool believes there is nothing he cannot do. God wants us to have an "I can" attitude, but not on the basis of our own strength. The real answer to effective "positive thinking" lies in the verse I read a moment ago—"I can do all things *through Christ*." Modern psychology depends solely upon the power of the individual, while the Christian depends upon the power of the Lord Jesus coupled with his own determination to let that power work through him. Jesus Christ is the only Source of wisdom and power that we can fully trust.

"Whatsoever things are . . . of good report . . . think on these things." Phil. 4:8.

In our consideration of the power and importance of right thinking, we considered the significance of self control, the strong influences brought to bear upon us by our thought life, and how the key to successful living involves the censorship of thought, coupled with the power of God. We cannot be all we want to be, nor can we do all we want to do, by pure self-determination; but we can do and be everything God desires of us if we yield our minds to Him and allow Him to work through both the heart and mind.

Not only does experience bear out the vital importance of mind control, but the Word of God says much to substantiate that principle. Consider the text—"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he"

(Prov. 23:7). And "Whatsoever things are . . . good . . . *think on these things.*"

What does the Bible mean when it speaks of the heart? There are something like seven hundred references to the heart in the Bible, not one of which, if my findings are correct, alludes to it as an organ of the body. There are broken hearts, clean hearts, evil hearts, hardened hearts, liberal hearts, contrite hearts, etc. Obviously these are not references to a vital organ of the body. It is a reasonably well established fact that we think, decide, determine, and draw conclusions by means of the mind, or brain.

In my studies of the Word by which I have sought to determine what the "heart" is with respect to thinking, loving, giving, lying, etc., I have come to the conclusion that it relates to thoughts and decisions that have their origin in the deeper part of the mind. Psychology has loosely divided the mind into two parts, the conscious and the subconscious. Of course it is all one, but functionally it is divided. Strange as it may seem, the *unconscious* makes up at least nine-tenths of the mind.

The other one-tenth, the part over which we can exercise control, is what we call the "conscious" mind. We can handle this fairly well. With it we reason, and accept or reject thoughts and ideas. The unconscious mind is a storehouse. In it are stored all the things we have ever done, all the impressions we have ever gained, all the things capable of influencing our behavior and mental attitudes. This part of the mind is more unwieldy. I know mine is. Try as I will, there are some memories I simply cannot bring up from the storehouse. They are there, but I cannot control them as I do the others. Nevertheless they have a profound in-

fluence on my life, for they make deep impressions and without my being aware of it, they are bringing constant influences to bear upon me, either good or bad.

Some Christians think they can say off-color things, watch what they please on television, listen to ugly and lewd things, and never be hurt by them, but this is untrue. They go into the storehouse, and one day they may assert themselves and cause no little embarrassment and trouble.

These are the things psychology and psychiatry have shown us. How do they fit with the Bible? In more than one passage of Scripture, mind and heart are used interchangeably—that is, there is a combination of the two, indicating that the mind and the heart—the conscious and unconscious mind—are one and the same, and that they function together. To cite a few: Matthew 12:34; “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”; Heb. 4:12: “God knows ‘the thoughts and intents of the heart’”; and “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he” (Prov. 23:7). It is what we harbor “deep down”—below the surface, as it were—that causes the concern. Many vicious people are congenial on the surface. You cannot tell by talking to them what harbingers of iniquity they are. But God knows. “He understandeth the thoughts afar off,” says the Psalmist (Psa. 139:2). It is what lies in the storehouse” that constitutes the potential dynamite—and God knows the mess that is there even when men deny it, or when they ignore it so long they think it is not there.

You therefore see how important it is to grasp firmly the reins of the mind, making sure it is brought under control. Let me point out that the mind is never controlled solely through prayer;

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there must be a continual awareness of the danger of evil thoughts, together with eternal vigilance against their taking over our thought processes. Hence Paul writes (to fill out the verse of our text): "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things!*"

This decisively ends the mistaken idea that God is responsible for our thoughts, and that we cannot control them. It is so easy to say, "God hasn't given me victory over this sin yet," when He would gladly have given you victory over it long ago had you put it from your mind and dedicated your thoughts to something better and loftier. Thoughts do not save souls, but they sometimes save bodies, and they may save reputations and Christians testimonies, as well as eternal rewards. If a man is what he thinks, he had better close the door of his mind to evil and open it to good. This is what Peter means when he admonishes, "Gird up the loins of your mind" (I Pet. 1:13). Belt it in; girdle it! We know what a girdle is: it is a contraption that is worn to control the flesh. Well, we are to girdle our minds that we may control our thoughts!

In 2 Corinthians 10:5 we have a strong statement about governing our thoughts. We read, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

"Evil imaginations." How much of your thought life is dedicated to imagining things you would like to do, but because of home training, or the respect

you have for others, you refrain? Evil imaginations all too frequently explode into evil deeds—to the surprise of those who know us, and to the consternation of those who have confidence in us. How important, then, in the light of this, to obey the injunction of Philippians 2:5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." His is a pure mind, a humble mind, a giving mind a selfless mind, a controlled mind.

We sometimes say, "I said that without thinking." No, we do not do anything without the use of the mind, nor do we say anything apart from the mind. Some things are done by instinct or reflex, I know, but we would say nothing or do nothing without the mind functioning. Many things we do and say are done ill-advisedly, spontaneously, or in the heat of temper, but they nested first in the mind. They could have popped out so suddenly that all control is lost, but they come via the mind, make no mistake about that. The truth is, there is so much hatred, so much filth, so much resentment, so much jealousy, so much bitterness stored in the recesses of the mind, they often tumble out unawares. A well-known Christian psychiatrist (Dr. Gilbert Little), after a practice of twenty-five years, says he is amazed and shocked at the amount of filth there is in the human mind. Yes it's in there, and it had better be under the control of the Spirit of God or a lifetime of decorum may be destroyed in seconds.

What does the Christian do who is plagued by evil thoughts? First, he confesses and forgets them. Dwelling on past sins after they have been put under the blood of Christ is not only foolish but will hinder spiritual development and create emotional problems. When God forgives, He forgets. Go thou and do likewise!

Second, as evil thoughts present themselves, learn to say "No" to them and deny them expression. This is not easy; habits are often hard to break—but resist them in the power of the Holy Spirit, remembering the promise of James 4:7, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." There is no promise of deliverance if you fail to resist. Don't make prayer take the place of resistance. Prayer is essential of course, but it does not by itself send the devil on his way. Resist!

Third, avoid places and activities that tend to give wrong suggestions to your thoughts. Thought control is easiest when we meditate on the Word of God and take time frequently to converse with Him.

Conversion

The small daughter of a missionary to Africa lived at a station where there were no other children. She therefore, in the manner of most lonely children, fashioned in her mind a make-believe playmate to whom she talked and with whom she played. One day she said to her mother: "Mama, I'm tired of 'pretendering.' I want a *real* playmate."

When I read that I said to myself: An awful lot of people in this world—grown-ups, no less—are "pretendering" in almost everything they say and do, and particularly in their efforts to find a satisfying *spiritual* answer to life. They feign satisfaction. They pretend they are meeting with the true God when they are only playing with an imaginary deity.

I simply don't take the bluff and bluster with which the modern mind approaches spiritual matters as representative of man's honest feelings about his relationship to incorporeal matters. I well remember the facade I erected during my unconverted days in an attempt to veil my spiritual questions and anxieties, but it was ninety per cent counterfeit. Allowing for the background differences between others and myself, I still feel that a healthy majority of those who profess disinterest or neutrality in the realm of religion are presenting a false face to the world. I know too much about man's construction to believe he can go through life without seri-

ous thoughts concerning the spiritual aspects of life. Even atheism is window dressing. It only reveals that some people are so exercised over their distinctive role in God's creation that they dedicate their full energies to futile attempts to extinguish the light God has placed in the window of their souls to remind them of their divine origin.

There are many ways to express the innate desire to understand life and arrive at a satisfactory conclusion with respect to life's purpose. The most common is expressed in the term "direction." If I understand the word rightly, it connotes the course or position of an object as it moves, turns or faces in relation to another object or point. Thus the person who finds direction in life must come to understand why he is where he is, why he is what he is, and where he is going.

In attempting to discover this, some have even become unbalanced mentally; others dig deeply into a multiplicity of religious ideas without ever settling on one; still others consider the whole matter too complicated and simply dismiss it. But are such attitudes justified? Are they satisfying?

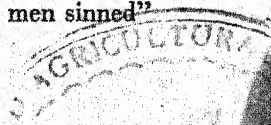
Before we can get our bearings, there are certain points of reference from which we must reckon. First it is necessary to ascertain the *right* direction. This is possible only when one understands that there are many *wrong* directions. Before I can correct a wrong direction I must realize it is wrong. This involves an application of the reasoning powers. It is never an instinctive thing.

Years ago I flew with a pilot who distrusted his compass and put his reliance on his own sense of direction. We were flying a small single-engine plane at night over a predominately agricultural area in the midwest. If you have ever conducted

such a caper, you know that points of reference are few and far between in a countryside dominated by farms. Once the pilot began to distrust his compass, everything went wrong. When he thought (in fact, insisted) we were flying due east, we later discovered we were flying south. After several hours of discrepant volitation, after which we were fortunate enough to negotiate a dead-stick landing at an emergency airfield, it was glaringly apparent that one may lose his sense of direction completely if the chief point of reference is distrusted or disregarded.

God has, in great mercy and wisdom, given man a reliable point of reference. That point of reference is His Word, the Bible. If we distrust it we will find ourselves thrashing about in all directions, unable to say which way is east or west, what way is up or down, which way is right or wrong. Yet this is what has happened in recent years since many educators and clergymen have discarded the Compass and determined to play it by instinct. We have people flying in all directions, each insisting he is "on the beam." But it should be obvious that *all* cannot be right, despite the complacency and self-confidence of each sojourner.

Now the Bible says we all come into this world pointed in the wrong direction morally and spiritually; that we each possess a nature that is not, in and by itself, capable of comprehending spiritual things or meriting eternal life. This is spelled out in such passages as Psalm 51:5: "I was brought forth in a state of iniquity; my mother was sinful who conceived me, and I, too, am sinful" (Amplified); Romans 5:12: "As through one man sin came into the world, and death as a consequence of sin, so death spread to all men, because all men sinned" (Williams).



These and kindred passages make it clear that we are by nature headed in the wrong direction. Until you begin with that premise, you cannot understand the abject futility of every human attempt to deal with man's depravity. You may philosophize and rationalize and theorize from now to the end of time, but you will never begin to understand human weakness until you accept the fact that man is *born wrong*, and consequently in desperate need of conversion.

Now don't let the word "conversion" scare you. It's a good word—not at all "square" or archaic. In fact, every mentally responsible person understands that everything around us is in the process of conversion. The energy of sunlight is constantly transforming (or converting) water and air into plant food, without which all life would perish. You and I can be mighty thankful for "conversion"; we owe our lives to it. The moment life begins it starts to convert—food converts into energy, energy into accomplishment, and later on one life converts into another by reproduction. Where there is life there is conversion; where there is no life there is no conversion. The mineral is taken up into the vegetable, the vegetable into the animal, the animal into man, and man into the kingdom of God. Notice that in each case of conversion the lower life converts to the upper.

So don't fear the word "conversion." It simply implies a new step, a new direction. You will agree that mankind needs a new direction. You know nothing is as it should or could be. Things in this old world are terribly wrong, from the criminal who lives off the industry of others to the dictator who ruthlessly brings suffering to others in his quest for power and dominion.

What men are is determined by the way they

are turned, and the way they are turned determines what they are. The big question as far as *you* are concerned is—is your face toward Christ, or have you turned your back on Him? If the former, you have understanding and purpose; if the latter, you don't know who you are, what you are here for, or where you are going.

Before you can effect any meaningful improvement in your life—and surely you will admit you need improvement—you must face a new direction. You must break with the old life. All your resolutions to be different, to wind up at a different destination, to overcome your besetting weaknesses, to find purpose and direction—all such will turn sour, all will mock you by their hollowness—until and unless you *turn*.

Of course merely “turning” is not the full answer; there is something to be turned *from* and *to*. Turning from the old life could be only a resolution—and the street of broken dreams is paved with good resolutions. No, it is not enough to turn from the old life; one must turn to the *new*; or more specifically to *Christ*. Only then can we avail ourselves of the provision He has made to expunge the old record, to forgive us of our past sins, and to provide us with the necessary strength and righteousness to meet the demands of God's law.

But, someone protests, isn't this tantamount to taking all the fun out of life? Doesn't this involve becoming long-jawed, stuffy, puritanical?

There is not a converted person on earth who won't tell you he didn't begin to live until he made Christ central in his life! That is my own testimony. There may be some who cannot testify to a pre-conversion life of debauchery, but I can—and I tell you of it, not through pride (God forbid!) but be-

cause there are those who say Christians are satisfied because they have never known any other life. That is an erroneous observation.

Most Christians have known years of the very opposite kind of life they are now living, and therefore are in a perfect position to compare. And what they will all tell you is that their life had no meaning, no direction, no discrimination, until they turned to Christ. Someone has said conversion is "an altered understanding," and so it is. But more than anything else, it is an altered understanding of *Christ*—not as a teacher or example, but as *Lord*, and therefore as Saviour. Conversion is a dominant affection for Christ, not merely a "firm hold on religious realities," as one writer described it. The "religious realities" are a Person, and it is *He* who takes a firm hold on *you*. You're not taking a firmer hold on something: Someone is taking a firm hold on you! It is not a matter of clenching your teeth and getting a stronger grip: it is you letting go and letting God!

Just as the planets in our solar system revolve around the sun, and are held steady by its gravitational pull, so the life that adopts Jesus Christ, God's Son, as its "Sun" will be held together, held "in orbit," and will find meaning and fulfillment in Christ.

There is no other or better way.

Happiness

What would it take to make you completely happy?

Your answer would not be a universal one. Each differs as to his concept of complete happiness; yet there is a common climate of thought these days about what constitutes the ideal existence.

I have chosen four of the most dominant ideas for today's discussion. There would be many others, of course, in a concensus poll. But let's briefly consider what a man said about these who tasted them to the full. I refer to Solomon, the author of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. He was a man who walked not just a few, but many paths. As one writer puts it, these books are the words "of one who drank every cup and wrote a label for each." Solomon did what most men have always wanted to do; he possessed what most men have wanted to acquire. Yet his writings are replete with evidences of disillusionment.

I repeat the question: What would make you completely happy? Surpassing Wisdom?

Solomon had more knowledge concentrated between his ears than any man who ever lived, save Jesus Christ. We are told his wisdom was superior to that of the wise men of the East and Egypt. He was an expert in botany and zoology. He wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. People came from

the four corners of the earth to confer with him and to assimilate his erudition. Yet Solomon defines this honor in somewhat strange terminology: "I applied my heart to know wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly. I discovered that this, too, is chasing after wind." Yes, strange words for a man so gifted and honored; a man who was scientist, philosopher, moralist, historian, publicist and poet. But so it was. The great Solomon with all his glory, after roaming through every realm of thought and imagination of human wisdom and knowledge, gave this dismal report, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!"

Allow me to insert this personal observation: Men may know many things, but not the best things—the things most worth knowing. They may horde rags and throw away riches. The brilliant geologist may have a heart as hard as the rocks he studies. The highly-trained meteorologist may have a life swept by fiercer passions than the winds he observes. The gifted oceanographer may have a life more troubled than the tides and seas he investigates. Thus Solomon, with all his sagacity, lost his spiritual discernment in his latter years and succumbed to apostasy and voluptuous living.

Why do you suppose God allowed Solomon to know so much, then become such a fool? For the same reason, possibly, He allows us to go our own headstrong way. But if Solomon's biography has any meaning, it is that mere human wisdom cannot satisfy. To know all there is to know in the realm of human knowledge is to follow the path of disappointment—if God is not first. Ten million, yea, ten billion biographies testify to this truth!

What would it take to make you completely happy? Several million alcoholics would probably reply, "All the booze I can hold." Of course it

wouldn't make them happy—just drunk—but let's admit our civilization has reached a point where alcoholic beverages are a very important factor in life. "Social" drinking (whatever that is) is exercised on virtually every level of business, professional life, and politics. The salesman pursuing the big order takes his customer to a cocktail lounge. When business and professional men meet in convention, the liquor flows. Washington, D. C. has the highest per capita liquor consumption in the nation. Do our legislators and the embassy staffs of scores of nations contribute nothing to those statistics? That would be hard to believe. Someone has said that business and political decisions affecting the lives of millions of people are made by men in varying stages of intoxication. Of course that cannot be proved, but we do know the cocktail parties in Washington are usually better attended than legislative sessions.

Now Solomon sought relief from the pressures of his work in alcohol. He said, "I explored in my heart to stimulate my body with wine . . . and to lay hold of frivolity, so that I might see what was good for man under the sun during his lifetime" (Eccles. 2:3. He was "exploring," he says. He says he did so while his "heart was acting with wisdom," so he probably didn't drink excessively; but he undoubtedly did some of the fool things men do when under the influence of alcohol.

One of the chief evidences of Solomon's wisdom was that, after he had tried and appraised something, he was honest enough to tell the truth about it. He didn't speak in defense of tippling as most drinkers do. Most imbibers have only words of scorn for the teetotaler, whom they portray as the black-garbed, long-nosed, umbrella-toting nitwit. But

Solomon, wise man that he was, reported the truth about the use of alcohol, while admitting he had foolishly tried it on for size: "Who has sorrow? Who has woe? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who feels hurt without cause? Who has blood-shot eyes? They who tarry long over wine, they who go to sample mixed wine" (Prov. 23:29, 30, Berkley).

Then he adds this word of caution: "Look not upon wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup (is fermented), when it goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder" (vv. 31, 32).

If you watch much TV, or attend the theatre (which I don't), you know there is a large society of persons who "need a drink" whenever they go out or come in. "Have a drink" is a common invitation and it seldom involves water. Nor does it involve anything that is beneficial. If the invitation were for a drink of castor oil, or milk of magnesia, it could be considered an act of real friendship, for neither taste much worse than liquor, and heaven knows they are better for you!

But of course the advertising is paying off—paying off in an ever-increasing number of helpless victims, broken homes, automobile wrecks, employee absenteeism, student riots, sex orgies, and so on. Only God can accurately estimate the carnage.

"Don't you believe in freedom?" you ask. Yes, I do. I believe in personal liberty—but not at the expense of someone else's rights and happiness. Earlier this month we had a four-day holiday weekend. Hundreds lost their lives on the highways. How many were innocent victims of someone else's selfishness, or drunkenness, or carelessness? The majority, you may be sure. When people tell me it is only the excessive drinker's fault that all these casualties

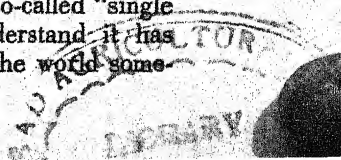
lie by the wayside, I say it is the result of a spirit of irresponsibility that parades under the guise of "personal liberty." Common sense tells us we can't drive just anywhere we want to, or walk the streets with smallpox. Should we continue to grant this "personal liberty" to those who are bent on destroying themselves and us?

Many insist prohibition can't be enforced, claiming it was tried and failed. But Dr. George Kirchway, the leading criminologist of the prohibition era, said that under prohibition there was a decrease in the crime rate of between 35 and 40 per cent!

Are things better today? Let these statistics answer: Fifty-six per cent of the women drink, 64 per cent of our teen-agers, and 77 per cent of our college students. We spend 13 billion dollars annually for liquor. Every year we produce 600,000 new alcoholics, and it costs us 20 billion dollars annually to treat them, 7 billion dollars more than the tax revenue received! Need more be said?

The third thing Solomon tried in his effort to find happiness was the company of bad women. Here again he played the fool. Read I Kings 11:1-8 for the full story of his folly. The man who had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines learned that there is nothing more wonderful than a good woman or more disastrous than a bad one.

It has been well said, "As go the women, so goes the nation." Surely woman, in her God-given role, is the Creator's loveliest gift to man. But civilizations now crumbled and gone, rotted when their women competed with men in wantonness and unrestrained indulgence. Some women of today seem so happy that they have reached the so-called "single standard" status, but do they understand it has sounded the nation's death knell? The world some-



how survives bad men, but never bad women.

Solomon knew the peril of ignoble women, but he also discovered the value of a good woman. So the man who said, "It is better to live in the corner of an attic than with a crabby woman in a lovely home" (Prov. 21:9) also said, "If you can find a truly good wife, she is worth more than precious gems!" (Prov. 31:10). The man who said, "O my son, trust my advice—stay away from prostitutes. For a prostitute is a deep and narrow grave. Like a robber she waits for her victims as one after another become unfaithful to their wives" (Prov. 23: 26-28), also said, "Charm can be deceptive and beauty doesn't last, but a woman who fears and reverences God shall be greatly praised" (Prov. 31:30). (All quotations from LIVING PSALMS AND PROVERBS).

"Poor rich Solomon. Poor fool-wise-man Solomon. Poor wine-tasting Solomon. Type of all our wisdom—in the slough of despond. Type of all our indulgence—in dark, abysmal despair. Type of all man's wrong conduct with women—surfeited with disgust." (Robert G. Lee in GOD'S ANSWER TO MAN'S QUESTION).

Let's learn from the world's wisest man. Failure to do so will brand us "fools" indeed!

Doubt and Unbelief

Very recently I came to see the difference between *doubt* and *unbelief*. Previously I considered them synonyms. But a book I read pointed out the contrast. *Doubt has to do with the intellect, while unbelief is an act of the will.*

A person may doubt because he lacks information, or because he does not possess a full complement of facts. But the unbeliever has set his will against something. The doubter merely has difficulty understanding. The unbeliever doesn't want to understand.

Nowhere is this distinction made clearer than in the lives of those who came in contact with Jesus Christ. Thomas, for example, was a doubter, but not an unbeliever. He doubted the fact of his Lord's reappearance because to him it was so incredible. He wanted to believe, and when convinced of Jesus' identity he did.

At one time or another nearly all the disciples doubted. There was the time when Jesus walked to their storm-tossed vessel upon the water. None of them at first believed it was He. It was Peter's spurt of faith in response to the Saviour's invitation that convinced them—yet one could not say they were "unbelievers."

The unbelievers in Jesus' day were those who deliberately rejected revelation; who refused to have

Him on any terms. Fact or fake, He was not for them. Their little lives, so well regulated in terms of personal whim, must not be shaken or changed. Such men cannot be convinced, irrespective of the proof presented.

So herein is seen the difference between Doubt and Unbelief. The former follows Him with open heart and mind, though incapable of understanding. The latter accepts no proof, however incontestible. Had you asked Jesus' disciples to explain all they had heard and seen, they would have been at a loss to do so; but as for rejecting Him as a *Person*—as a very special God-sent *Person*—such a thing never crossed their minds.

I believe there is a sense in which one may doubt, yet not reject Christ. My mail abounds with letters from such folk. I think many are saved; I believe they love the Lord and are bound for heaven—but some confess tearfully and woefully to doubts they do not understand and are loathe to tolerate. About such I worry little. Of course it is better to trust than doubt, but these are Satanic attacks and are usually of a temporary nature. God understands them. He won't penalize someone for being the victim of emotions he doesn't understand or mental agitation with which he cannot always cope.

But the *unbeliever*—he is a different breed. His is a pre-set mind! If he argues at all—and he usually does—it is always against, never in favor of Christ. He rejects a hundred obvious things while harping on the one incomprehensible. His conversation abounds with contempt. He delights in the one thing he cannot understand instead of the many things he can.

When I was a boy, it was common to hear one playmate say to another: "So-and-so is out to get

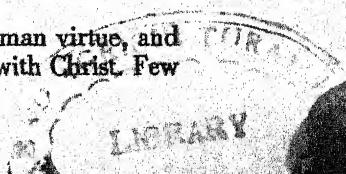
you." That could strike terror to the heart of a child as he envisioned a bully around every corner. Well the unbeliever, in a manner of speaking, is "out to get" Jesus Christ. He is not out to discover the good in Him, but to discredit Him if he can. Such people spend their lives attempting to explain Him away. They are never happier than when propounding a pet argument or conjuring up a "loaded" question. The fact that they are unable to account for Christ on a conventional basis evidently does not disturb them. They appear obsessed with a determination to undermine belief in Him at any cost.

Such people ask questions, not to learn something, but in the hope they may establish their denials, or make the believer stammer. I receive many letters from people who ask questions, but really don't want answers—answers, that is, that do not confirm their viewpoint. Sometimes they inadvertently disclose their motive, asking, "What do you think about this?"

Then they proceed to set forth their own beliefs. If I were to disagree, my reply would be a waste of time. They are pre-convinced. Their inquiries are contrived to provoke an argument or to spark an exchange of correspondence for which they apparently have time, but I do not. Assuming therefore, "a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still," I spare both myself and them.

Not all unbelievers overtly reject Christ but this is what it amounts to, for unbelief is rejection. The unbeliever will cast aside anything that interferes with his self life; anything that dents his pride or starves his vanity. Unbelief argues against truth because it fears truth.

Honesty is not a conspicuous human virtue, and it is least evident in man's dealings with Christ. Few



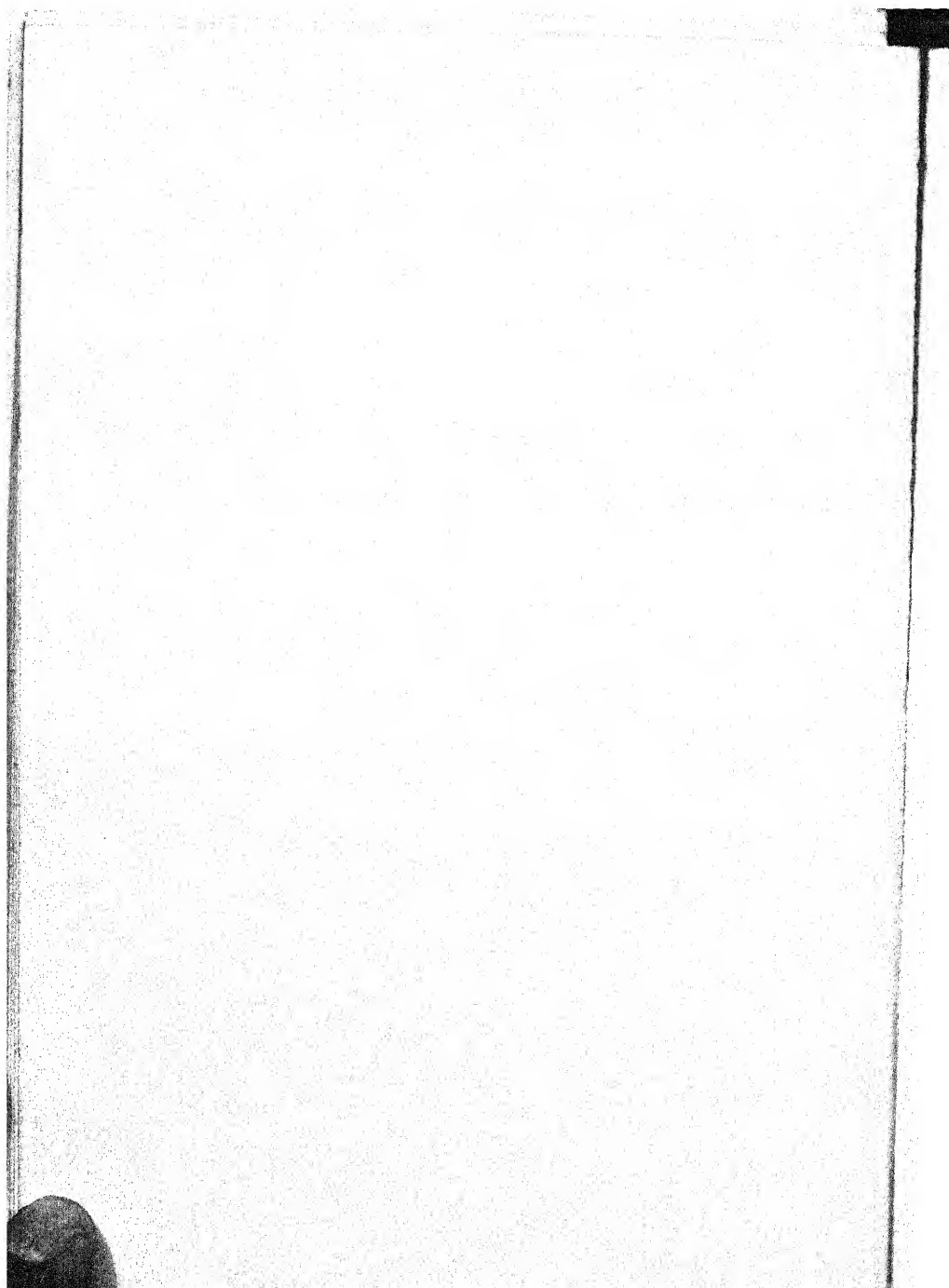
will honestly investigate the matters with which they take issue. Many see Jesus Christ only as a deterrent to their personal ambitions and desires. It is a conceded fact that pornographic literature never fails to discredit the Christian position, and most of it is atheistic. If the purpose of these publications is simply to make money in appealing to the baser urges of human nature, why are the editors not content with their dirt, leaving religion out of it? The answer is that the Christian faith is an *obstacle* to their philosophy and to the smut they peddle. Their chances of survival are enhanced, they reason, if they can discredit and destroy religious faith.

My friend, you should know that unbelief is a lethal exercise. I warn you against it. I beg of you to appraise your feelings and values. I despair of no one who is beset by honest doubts, for he can be set straight—but the deliberately disobedient, the individual who rejects overwhelming evidence—is in deep trouble. He suffers from hardening of the heart, and that is a great deal more serious than hardening of the arteries!

The apostle Peter reminded those to whom he addressed his epistles that he had not followed “cunningly devised fables” when making known to them the power of the Lord Jesus, but that he and the brethren “were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” These men were eyewitnesses *because they wanted to see!* The doubter may master his doubts as he reviews evidences that favor his Christian faith; but the unbeliever who sets his mind against The Faith for ulterior reasons will be dealt with as Jesus dealt with the stubborn Pharisees—an unpleasant prospect.

Paul in his Roman letter says: “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodli-

ness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). An obvious reference to those who, by a deliberate crystallizing of the will, refuse to believe. Beware my friend; this is a death sentence! Stop right now to analyze your attitudes and see if you have set up a psuedo-faith that bespeaks your personal whims; one that says, "Don't confuse me with the facts—I've already made up my mind!"



Marriage

In the course of my radio ministry, I presume I have spoken on the subject of marriage no less than two or three hundred times, possibly more. Always there is a marked response to such discussions. I am left no choice but to assume that many married couples need help. One must almost agree that the adage, "Love is the star men look up to as they walk along, and marriage is the coal-hole they fall into!" is not far amiss. On the other hand, a quotation from the ARKANSAS GAZETTE is also in order: "It is those who have tried it most frequently who are convinced that marriage is a failure."

Overtly successful marriages are not common. I have arrived at that conclusion after penetrating observation over a period of many years. I do not gauge this by the divorce rate alone. Most marriages that fail never reach the divorce court.

Most young people, upon reaching the age of marriage, believe they will solve the majority of their problems by establishing a home of their own. But many an "eligible" would do well to give heed to something Kenneth L. Krichbaum once said: "The most disillusioned girls are those who married because they were tired of working!" The same might be said of those who marry because they are sick of their homes, or resentful of parental authority. Marriage brings many rude awakenings, not the least of which is that it really doesn't solve prob-

lems. It isn't supposed to! The individual who is unhappy before marriage will be equally unhappy afterward; in fact, almost certainly unhappier!

When two people marry they are combining their problems. Living becomes even more complicated.

Then there is the unconfirmed, baseless supposition that a failing marriage will automatically recover in response to a change in circumstances. We don't deny that certain adjustments can prove advantageous. For example, I sometimes advise couples to move away from their in-laws when it is obvious they won't let them live their own lives or raise their children as they see fit. But in most instances changing circumstances changes nothing within a marriage. A better house, more money, or the arrival of a family—none of these things really change anything. Marital incompatibility goes much deeper than existing circumstances.

Marriage, as God-intended, means that neither partner can continue doing as he or she pleases. *I hope you didn't miss that.* A successful marriage is impossible if either partner ignores or violates the rights and feelings of the other.

Like all other couples, Mrs. Jess and I went through the trying, often agonizing, experience of adjustment. But out of this trial-and-error experience came several basic, unalterable rules. One is that neither of us can appreciably transform the other. The purpose of marriage is not to mold another life to suit oneself, but to adapt. Bruce Larson, in his book *DARE TO LIVE NOW!* says, "A Christian marriage involves seeing and understanding the other person as he really is and loving him just that way." I don't know anything that should be added to that.

For some reason, most of the mail outlining marital problems comes to me from women. I suppose that is to be expected. Men are less disposed than women to write—and probably a strained marriage relationship affects them less, or they are better situated to escape the atmosphere of an unhappy home. But what I want to point out is that so many wives ask what they can do to change their husbands; how they can make them assume more responsibility in the home, have more concern for the children, go to church and so on. I needn't tell you many husbands are hard to live with, are touchy, stubborn and selfish. The wives of many such men want their children to have good spiritual training in the home, to attend Sunday school, to respect their father, yet they run into all manner of hindrances to these legitimate goals in the home. So again and again comes the plea: "Tell me how I can change my husband!"

Well, advice is cheap; and furthermore, there are no pat answers to marital problems. Because they all differ in some respects, the solutions differ. One thing is virtually certain: no husband will change for the better—*until his wife changes*. What this means is that something is usually contributing to a husband's obdurancy, and the cure will be found only in a changed companion. This may be a long, slow process, but you can be certain it is a necessary prelude to an improved marital situation.

C. S. Lewis once wrote: "No clever arrangement of bad eggs ever made a good omelet," which is another way of saying that there is no way God can change a marriage and leave the people involved unchanged. The fact is, many a wife has wasted hundreds of prayers asking God to change her husband when some really honest prayers for herself would

have done the trick! The same can be applied in reverse.

Sometimes my heart bleeds when I read letters from Christian wives who are obliged to live with profane, philandering, alcoholic husbands. Such women often beg me to tell them what they can do. Most of them see only divorce, or at best, some separation arrangement. Often their letters tell of the numerous ways they have sought to make their husbands respectable and responsible. They have begged, argued, shamed, preached, quoted the Bible, threatened to leave, and prayed—all to no avail. Most have the same complaint: "I have tried everything, but nothing works."

Now, as I have said, my heart goes out to these women, and I repeat, that there are no pat answers, no "sure cures." Yet I would like to ask these distracted wives whether they have thought to pray for *themselves* instead of their husbands? How many, I wonder, have asked themselves what is wrong in their own lives that makes a man determined to avoid a similar experience?

Some of you wives may take this resentfully (and I specify "wives" only because it is they who customarily write; it could as well be a husband); but let me point out that a wife's primary obligation is to make her husband *happy*, not "good." I am not going to advocate gross compromise, of course, such as entering into evil pacts to please him; but it would seem many wives think that all compromise is to be avoided; that being a Christian means resigning from every normal husband-and-wife relationship when one member of the duet is unconverted. At this root lies more marital unhappiness than can ever be imagined.

For example, I have known Christian wives to

hike off to a church function night after night, leaving their unbelieving husbands alone, and this in the name of Christian "separation," or noncompromise. Understand I am all for faithful church membership, but I believe a compatible marriage is sometimes even more important, especially when children are involved. When you tell me you won't compromise in your marriage, I reply by saying that the very heart of a successful marriage is compromise! To embark on a policy of utter inflexibility in a marriage is to predoom it to failure.

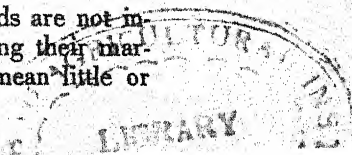
But a wife complains: "Why must I always give in? If just once he would give in!" This, of course, is the basic frustration of all unhappy marriages.

It is true that when two people marry they become one. But the question is, which one! Think of two solar systems trying to occupy the same space at the same time—or two suns vying for the center with orbiting planets all around. One would expect chaos and collision. Likewise in a home. There must be a Center, a point of reference. In the Christian home, *Christ* is that Center. The husband, wife and children then find their proper orbit around Him.

In a marriage without Christ, one plus one equals two. Where there are children, one plus one plus one plus one equals four. This makes four centers, which is why some homes are hell on earth!

Paul says in I Cor. 6:16 that two (husband and wife) shall be physically one. If you consider this mathematically, it sounds ridiculous for it's like saying one plus one equals one. Yet this is exactly what the Bible says and it makes wonderful sense in the metaphysics of matrimony!

I am sure some wives and husbands are not interested (at least outwardly) in making their marriage work. To some marriage vows mean "little or



nothing. The fact is, lying is such a universal trait, it isn't surprising that the solemn vows spoken at the altar are mere formalities that carry no binding obligation in the minds of those who make them. Unless a person sees value in honesty, he will care little for the sanctity or preservation of his marriage. But to those who really desire to find a solution to the incompatibility that developed after the knot was tied, I leave this word with you: Your marriage stands little chance of improvement until you change. All the prayer you can cram into your schedule won't change a thing in your home, until *you* change. And should you say, "I will change when *he* does," or, "I will change when *she* does," you are really saying that your own pride and selfishness will be allowed to close the door on any chance your marriage might have for success.

The husband or wife who staunchly refuses to yield or take the lead in mending a crumbling marriage need not bother to seek counsel or feel sorry for himself when his marriage falls apart. The only real progress in saving a disintegrating marriage comes when the offended party honestly prays, "Lord, change this marriage beginning with me!"

Quitting

Have you ever felt like a failure? Have you ever come to the end of the day, analyzed its happenings as they pertained to your own life, and said to yourself, "As far as this one was concerned, I might just as well have skipped it"?

Unless you are an egomaniac, you have experienced many such days. Most of us find these days filled with impressions of futility. If there is a sense of victory and accomplishment anywhere, it usually lies in the archives of memory. But for the present, or future—*nothing*.

Only recently I replied to a letter in which the writer complained of ascertaining no purpose (or "excuse," as she termed it) for her existence. I gained the impression she may have been rather disappointed had she discovered some worthwhile function within the scope of her ability.

Many labor under the false impression that to fail is to sin. This need not be so at all. We may try and try, and fail and fail—but until we take failure as final, as inevitable, we are really not failures.

The pages of every history book are crowded with records of accomplishment by men whose names have come down to us as stand-outs in a spectrum of attainments, some worthy, some reprehensible. But they did achieve dazzling goals in their quest for distinction, whatever channels those

attributes may have followed. They were standouts because they just wouldn't quit!

Lithocolor — Galley 21

As one reads the news reports seeping or cascading out of the Soviet Union—according to Russian choice—he gains the impression that every try that nation makes in the field of science meets with consummate success. But informed sources tell us that the world hears about the *achievements* only. The many failures are never acknowledged. Still, because they keep relentlessly at it, they do succeed—and this holds true of our own nation, the difference being that we publicize the failures, too.

The “success” is he who never quits no matter how numerous his failures. This applies to a person who undergoes a tracheotomy and must learn to talk again; or the double amputee who must learn to walk or write again; or the paralytic who must achieve independence again. History records the accomplishments of deaf men who composed music, those who learned to talk and read though blind and deaf, those who lived normal lives while crippled or otherwise handicapped. Most of these men and women were not geniuses in the accepted sense of the term; they were just persistent. They learned many words, but “fail” was not one of them.

I know people, as do you, who flit from one area to another—from one place of employment to another. Today they are here, tomorrow some place else. Each time they fail, they quit and try something new. When they fail, they take the failure as *final*. Some day, somewhere, somehow, they will hit *something* and will succeed. To such people, failure is evidence that they should be doing something else. Such people never seem to find the combination for success.

Now and then we run across a person of whom it is said, "He made and lost several fortunes." But notice the person is usually currently solvent, for the simple reason that, when he lost a million, he dug in and made it back. I have personally known two such men. One was nearly wiped out ten or twelve years ago; today his holdings are in the millions. Another died recently, vastly wealthy, but during his lifetime he had made and lost at least two fortunes. Such men never say die. They bounce back like rubber balls; they don't lie down, have a tantrum, and call it quits when they miss the boat. They reason "I did it once, I can do it again."

Jesus applied this principle to the kingdom of God when He said, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." He did not mean all quitters would go to hell; He meant they would simply be useless as disciples — on the minus side — liabilities, not assets.

Did he mean a Christian could not fail? Of course not. Do you think He was unaware that Judas would betray Him, that Peter would deny Him, that Thomas would doubt Him, that His disciples would all sleep through His hour of anguish in the Garden? No, He was keenly aware of human frailty. He was highlighting the unfitness of quitters—those who begin a race, but who drop out at the first fatigue or obstacle. When a man asked to attend his father's funeral before joining His evangelistic party, Jesus told him to let the dead bury their dead. When another wanted a couple of days to attend a farewell party, Jesus made it clear He could not use a "mama's boy."

What mission board has not been frustrated and put to no end of trouble and expense by mission-

NM-0011

aries who painstakingly prepare for service on the mission field, bid their fond farewells, then return home at the first fever or attack of homesickness? I am trying to say that *the combination for success lies within man himself*, as he fuses his will to the will of God. Many look for the clue to success in a new project. Most of the people who write me about their problems blame someone else. I have no way of judging the veracity of their claims, but I know a predominate human trait is to say as Adam said to God, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree . . ."—and as Eve complained, "The serpent beguiled me." (Genesis 3, verses 12,13).

Actually, there is an element of success in failure, for those who never fail are those who never try! It seems that some people would rather do *nothing* than risk failure. And the result is failure anyway.

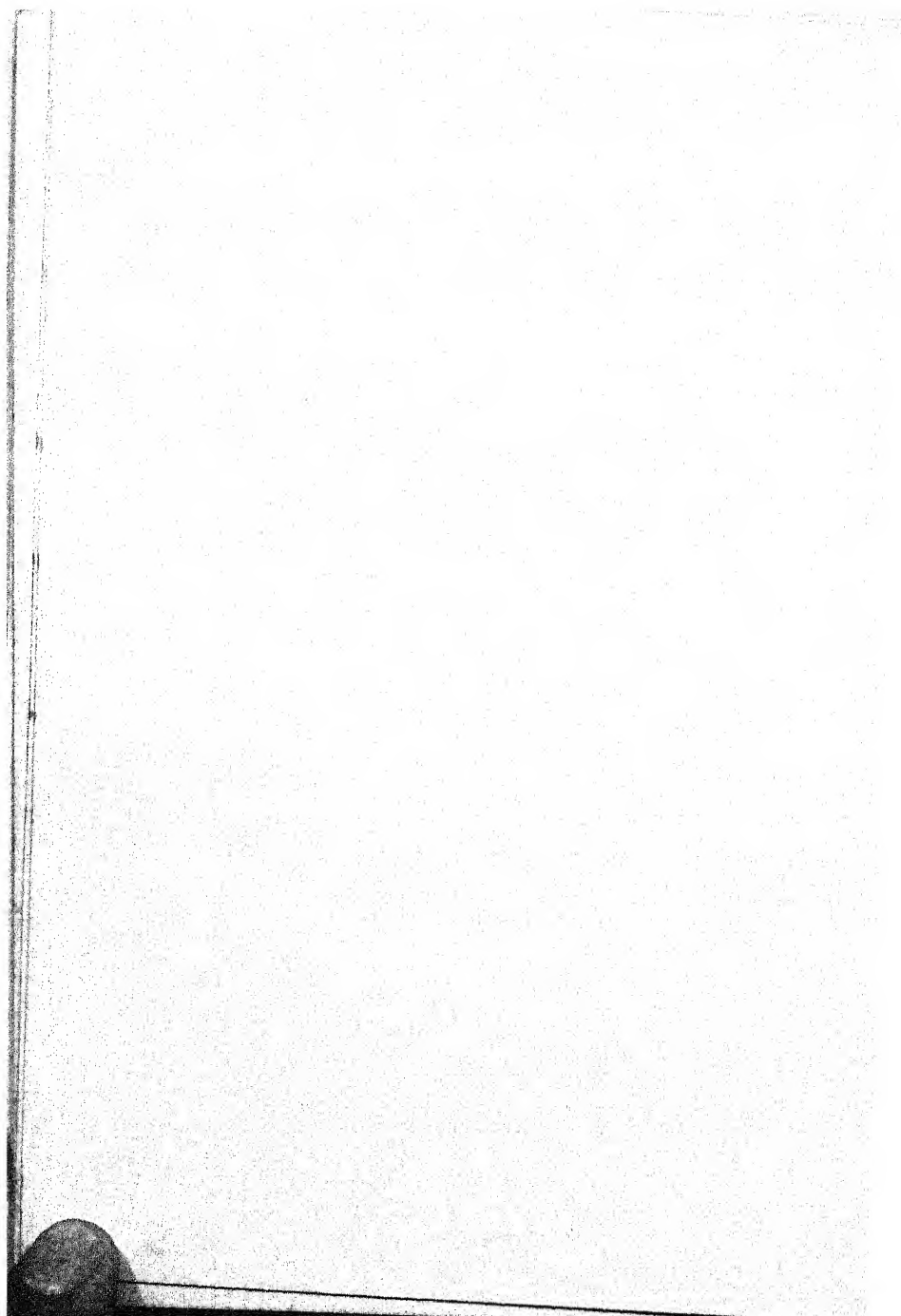
One of Thomas Edison's assistants once said to him, after 1,000 failures, "Isn't it about time we quit?" Edison replied, "Why quit now? We know a thousand things that won't work!" Which is another way of saying, "It's always too soon to quit."

Now, what I have said thus far sounds far too philosophical to suit me, because it is almost one hundred per cent "positive thinking," and although I have a healthy respect for a "positive" philosophy, I believe it is only one element of success. Besides, we are not talking of success as the world counts it. We are not talking about financial empires, or thriving business ventures, or social distinction. "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" It is of greater importance to win a moral or spiritual battle than to win one against occupational competition. It is better to be

bankrupt financially than suffer bankruptcy of the soul. Yet there is a kinship between success in both the spiritual and material realm. Both require determination. Both require an overwhelming desire to excel. Both use failures as stepping stones, not stumbling blocks.

Some of you talk about your spiritual victories in the past tense, and this is wholly unnecessary. If you experienced blessing and victory ten weeks or ten months or ten years ago, you can experience it *today*. The source and availability of power has not changed; *you* have. Somewhere back there Peter looked at the churning waves and became frightened and went down. You fell in the mud and laid there, sprawled out, bitter and complaining. That is kid stuff. Get up and go on.

It's too soon to quit!



Fear

How often we parents have reassured our children with the words, "Don't be afraid." They often need that personal word of assurance in their growing-up years. And we adults need it in our world.

Fear is a dominant emotion in society. Everyone must be afraid at times; yet there are many approaches to this common perturbation of the consciousness. Philosophers can wax quite eloquent on the subject.

The late George Bernard Shaw once said: "In this world, there is always danger for those who are afraid of it," the thought being that most dangers are imaginary; that we create them ourselves out of the materials of the mind. Another modern quote: "Too many people go through life running from something that isn't after them." This is a self-evident truth, but is everyone running from an imaginary something? Rudyard Kipling once wrote: "Of all the liars in the world, sometimes the worst are your own fears." Granted that many fears are capricious products of the mind. But are all of them—always?

Dr. J. Wallace Hamilton, in his book, *RIDE THE WILD HORSES*, makes this appropriate observation: "Many books written on the subject (of fear) are nothing more than a delightful little treatise on how to get rid of fear, or how to master or conquer it;

they are negative and unsatisfying because they start out on a false premise that fear is an enemy, an evil and harmful emotion to be completely driven out. You will not win if you start from there; you will never come out right from a false start."

Well, whatever attitude we may take toward fear, one thing is obvious to the basically honest person: fear is a *reality*. Deny it if you will, but it is with us—and to some extent, with *you*. The little boy was at least half honest when he said, "I'm not scared, but my stomach is!" We all have scared stomachs now and then.

It would be sheer poppycock to say all fear is groundless. We live in a pretty frightening, dangerous world. The children in our house were not indoctrinated with the bunk that "there is nothing to fear but fear." As long as there are speeding automobiles, lurking rattlesnakes, open windows, rusty razor blades, epidemics—you name it—children, and grown-ups too, should keep alive some healthy fears. The Bible says we live in a dangerous world. In the 21st chapter of Luke there are warnings about the character of the last days—"distress on earth among the nations"; "men swooning from dread and apprehension about events that are taking place in the world" (Berkley Ver.). These are *real* fears, based on things that do and can take place. Small wonder that so many people suffer from a multiplicity of phobias. There is acrophobia, the fear of height; claustrophobia, the fear of closed places; agoraphobia, fear of open places; neophobia, fear of the new; pathophobia, fear of disease; photophobia, fear of light; spermaphobia, fear of germs—more than seventy-five phobias, in fact, ranging from ereuthophobia, fear of blushing, to phobophobia, the

fear of all things!

Of course most of these are abnormal fears, based largely on nonexistent dangers. But they are very real to those suffering from one or more of them, which establishes the fact that we can't wave fear aside with a platitude, or even an inspired verse of Scripture. I think the fear complexes so prevalent in our day deserve an in-depth analysis.

Now, let it first be said that fear can be either friend or foe. That it is sometimes an enemy is highlighted by the fact that the term, "Fear not," is used sixty-three times in the Old Testament, and at least sixteen in the New. I like the Berkley translation of 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and love and self-control." Whenever fear engenders distrust in the Bible, or causes us to lose close-linked fellowship with Christ, or to assume an outlook on life that negates our Christian testimony and gets our nerves in such a jangle we are physically, mentally and spiritually enervated and devitalized—then fear is a prodigious enemy and must be dealt with quickly and decisively.

Christians must face the jolting but unvarnished fact that God is not pleased when we "run scared." Too often we become upset and unduly concerned about family matters, or our own welfare, or the state of the world. You might say our fears are barometers that indicate our spiritual health. There are certain anxieties that have no rightful place in the life of full trust. Conversely, fear sometimes blesses the world, leads people out of bondage, preserves freedom, and even saves civilizations.

I think the person is either stupid or naive who doesn't fear Communism, who isn't alarmed at some of the things that stare at us from the front pages of our newspapers. I'm glad when some people—

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those who have the ear of the masses—are willing to express their fears about the encroaching bureaucracy, about far-left policies in government, about the ascendancy of materialism and relativism in education, and so on. Thank God for fears which stimulate meaningful debate and serious thought, fears that bring about significant evaluations, that throw the spotlight on evils lurking beyond the vision of ordinary citizens. America owes its survival to men who were afraid we would lose our birthright, afraid we would be enslaved by ruthless aggressors, afraid we would surrender all we hold dear due to lack of vigilance. You and I are free today because our forbears had fears, fears that led them into vital, precautionary action.

Because men fear disease there are thousands of research projects now under way in laboratories across the nation projects designed to discover the cause and cure of disease. The Gospel is being preached across the world because men are afraid to live and die without God. This is not cowardice; it is good judgment. It is making a friend of fear.

What is meant then by all the “fear nots” in the Bible—nearly a hundred of them? If we live in a world of fear, and fear can be our friend, why does the Bible admonish so many times *not* to fear?

Let's first point out that the “fear nots” in the Word of God are for God's children, not the devil's. One cannot read the prophecies pertaining to the closing hours of this age without realizing that fears will increase. As already mentioned, Luke tells us that as those days approach, men's hearts will “fail” them “for fear” (21:26); and those heading the list of the doomed in Revelation 21:8 are the “fearful.” But to put one's full trust in Jesus Christ is to lose fears that plagued us. Let's look at a few.

The trusting Christian will not fear evil. Oh, he'll have a healthy respect for it; he won't be cocky about it—but he knows all evil emanates from a common source, Satan, and that he is a defeated foe when we combat him in the spirit and power of Calvary. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," (Jas. 4:7) is still a faithful promise, and we must appropriate it often. It helps, too, to know that God has a strange way of making evil serve His own ends in the long run, and that aids in banishing fear.

The trusting Christian will not fear pain. I don't mean he will enjoy it, but pain is sometimes part of the suffering needed to refine and mature us. If more Christians would concentrate on finding the purpose in their infirmity and less in trying to be healed of it, I think their lives would count for more.

The trusting Christian does not fear trouble. I don't mean he looks for it, or welcomes it. But how often we find that when we look for happiness it eludes us, but when we trust in Romans 8:28 — "... all things go on working together for the good of those who keep on loving God, who are called in accordance with God's purpose" (Williams Trans.) —we come by it almost unawares.

Of course we suffer disappointments. We ask again and again, "Why?" But many Christians testify that they never really lived until they struck something they couldn't handle themselves, and turned it back to God. The less we fight trouble the more meaningful—yes, even strengthening—it becomes.

The trusting Christian does not fear old age. Not that it is the most pleasant of thoughts to realize the time will come when, as Dr. Hugh Black once said, we hear "the sound of closing doors about us." Old age brings weaknesses, limitations, sometimes

even a feeling of being neglected. But the way we meet old age really depends on how much faith we allow God to give us. After all, we have the greatest of all friends with us always—and He should be enough.

Finally, the trusting Christian will not fear death. You know, death is really a part of life, according to the Bible. One of the “fear nots” is Matthew 10:28, and this is the way it’s translated in the Berkley Version: “Be not afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

It reminds us of Peter’s sermon recorded in Acts 2:24: “This very Jesus, I say, after He was betrayed . . . you had wicked men to kill Him by nailing Him to a cross, but God raised Him up by loosing Him from the pangs of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held by the power of death” (Williams Trans.).

“Impossible . . . to be held by the power of death!” That was said of Jesus, and it’s true of the Christian. Because most fear germinates in uncertainty, Christians can be brave. People fear the dark because they don’t understand its sound and shadows. But the trusting Christian *knows* what lies beyond this life—and he likes what he knows! He knows the Christ who said, “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

That, I think, is enough to dispell *all* fears—for all time!

Contentment

It is doubtful that any of us does not feel, much of the time, that we could achieve a greater degree of happiness and contentment if conditions in our lives were "just a little different."

The real or imagined need differs with the individual. With one it might involve a larger income; with another a healthier body; with another a more compatible marriage relationship, and so on. With most of us there abides the strong conviction that we have somehow missed just the right formula, the proper combination of events, that make for perfect and abiding felicity.

I have not travelled broadly, but I have journeyed beyond the boundaries of the continental United States on a number of occasions, and I have found that the idea of satisfaction varies according to location, culture, race and environment. With some it is primarily a matter of having enough to eat, and from there it ascends to things more diversified and complex. The spirit of dissatisfaction, however, is not limited to any one area of the world. It reaches into the peasant hovel and the royal palace. It eats into the soul of the pauper and the millionaire. It is a universal human failing. Discontent is also prevalent among Christians, I have found, so the writer of Hebrews lays his finger on an all-encompassing human fault when he writes in Hebrews

13:5: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

I would like to strike a positive note in discussing this restless, dissatisfied spirit, pointing out several reasons why God wants and expects us to be content with such things He has seen fit to give us.

One of the most effective ways of finding contentment is to count *blessings* instead of hardships. To some, life consists only of burdens and oppressions. They dwell, not upon the good things they have, but upon their many unfulfilled wants. Needless to say, there can be no contentment under such conditions. Who of us, in a world so filled with material things, could not easily reach for things beyond our grasp? I think you would find that the very wealthy sometimes lie awake nights yearning for things their riches cannot secure for them. God desires for His people a spirit of contentment that covers all places and all conditions. A man whose daily experiences brought him into circumstances of privation and persecution and great physical suffering was able to say: "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Phil. 4:11, 12). And in another letter, written to his son in the Lord, Timothy, he wrote: "And having food and raiment, let us therefore be content" (I Tim. 6:8), pointing out in verse 6 of this same chapter that "godliness with contentment is great gain."

Looking about us, we are aware of an enigma—happy and miserable people living in identical cir-

cumstances! It is not uncommon to find those in very moderate circumstances enjoying life more than the affluent. We therefore conclude that contentment is an *inner possession*, not a *purchase*. It is likewise a matter of the object of our affection and confidence. If the affection is set upon material things, the chances for contentment are meager, for the human heart has an avaricious bent, and the soul is too immense to be completely taken up with the mundane.

The late John D. Rockefeller, Sr., was once asked by a reporter how much money it took to satisfy a man, and Mr. Rockefeller's reputed reply was, "Just a little bit more." He was at least honest—but in his honesty he also admitted to a basic infirmity in human nature—the inability to find gratification in possessions.

History records that Nero, despite his wealth and power, was an inveterate complainer, while the apostle Paul sang and wrote epistles of divine encouragement while chained in a dungeon!

Many years ago a wealthy New Yorker, congratulated by a friend on his vast holdings, replied, "Thank you, but you have no idea how much trouble I have taking care of it." Lord Byron declared in his last hours that he had never had as many as twelve happy days in all his life; and the great Napoleon said, "I turn with disgust from the cowardice and selfishness of man. I hold life a horror, death a repose. What I have suffered the last twenty days is beyond human comprehension." In the jargon of today we would be prone to say, "Look who's talkin'," but you will not deny his words have deep significance when you consider they came from a man who had conquered the then-known world!

It is the heart that is right with God that is con-

tented. If you are living in a disconsolate state even though you are a Christian, your symptoms should prove to you that you suffer a deep and dangerous lack in your submission to Him. No one enjoying a harmonious relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son will be miserable or morose, I care not what the circumstances may be.

I have found contentment without material riches because I realize the scene now before my eyes will soon shift to other worlds, and it is this "Big Step" that is in the final analysis all-important. I don't expect to be buried in a bronze casket, but the man who is will be just as dead as I, and maybe infinitely worse off! Death is the great leveler—but it is more. It is the great separator. When it takes over, there is no coming back to argue or dissent.

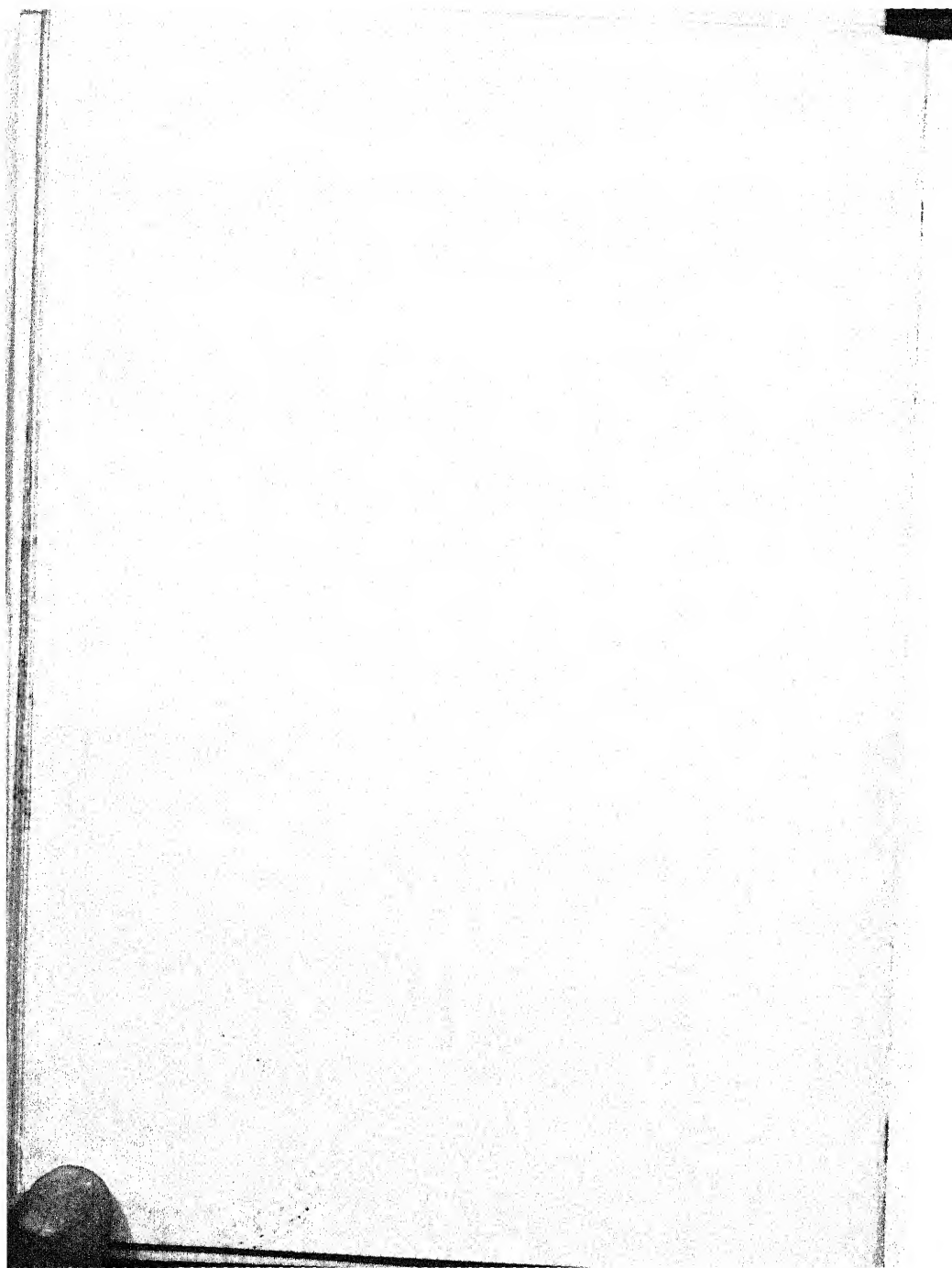
It is basically stupid to be in a constant commotion about "things" or lack of them, for life is too short to make them an issue, and we are too relatively unimportant. Who cares today that Xerxes crossed the Hellespont on a bridge of boats? Who trembles now at Nebuchadnezzar at the gates of Jerusalem? Who worries about Napoleon and his intrepid armies? How strange it is that the world does so well without names that once made the headlines. We revere the memory of many, but others took their place, and for all practical purposes they are forgotten. Paul says, "The fashion of this world passeth away," and since this is true, how futile, how stupid to spend our years moping and complaining about the things we lack. Let's put to their utmost use the talents we have, for they are the tools with which God permits us to work, and that will determine what we shall be in eternity.

I find contentment today in the knowledge that

God knows what is best for me. You good and responsible parents—you know what is best for your child, don't you? Though he may grumble and sass and find fault with your decisions, you know in your heart you are right and he is wrong, and that he must resist in vain. How much better it would be for the child if he would submit to your authority and enjoy the many things he is allowed to do, rather than grumble about the few things he is denied.

True contentment is epitomized in the knowledge that God is our Father and we are His children; that He is on our side, and that He will never fail us. I recall now the words of David as he walked into life's sunset, with the wealth of life's vicissitudes behind him. He said: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Should not we, as the children of God's care and the object of His great love, be pre-occupied less with life's "wants" and more with its sufficiencies? With this as our goal, we shall find peace; we shall "be content with such things as we have."



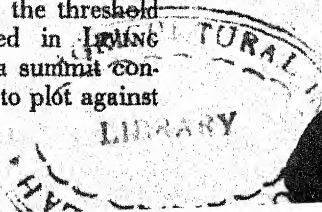
The Future

PART I

There is no question in the mind of the competent observer that history is moving rapidly toward its destiny. These are troubled days—climactic days. They are, in fact, days that portend the end of human civilization as we now know it, or as it has been known throughout recorded history. As Billy Graham has so graphically stated on several occasions, *we are on a collision course*. There are no human solutions to the problems men face. World leaders who are unfamiliar with the prophecies of the Bible cannot possibly know what a day may bring forth, or what the end will be.

Only the divine interpretation of history and the divine revelation of the prophetic future of nations, throw light on these troubled times. Those who believe the Bible is the Word of God and therefore inerrantly true, believe the future—and possibly the immediate future—will demonstrate the immutable truth and wisdom of Proverbs 14:34, “Godliness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”

Responsible Bible students believe we are now living in the atmosphere of God's divine dealings with the nations, and that we are on the threshold of divine judgment. As paraphrased in *Living PSALMS*, Psalm 2:2, 3 reads, “For a summit conference of the nations has been called to plot against



the Lord and His Messiah, Christ the King! 'Come, let us break His chains,' they say, 'and free ourselves from all this slavery to God'."

As a result of a wholesale departure from godliness and the restraints imposed by the God of the Bible, the world is facing an international crisis unprecedented in world history. A tremendous revolution is under way—a revolution in science, in morals, in economics, in theology. As one observer has put it, "The world is aflame with the raw passions of men ambitious for power and desperate to be freed from poverty and frustration." Surely world affairs are moving like a colossal machine out of control. Some of us believe they will never be brought under control until One capable of bringing order out of the chaos returns, Jesus Christ Himself.

The late President John F. Kennedy said: "I speak today in an hour of international peril and of national opportunity. Before my term has ended, we shall have to test anew whether a nation organized and governed such as ours can endure. The outcome is by no means certain. The tide of events has been running out, and time has not been our friend."

Well, we are all keenly aware that whatever the future holds, it will be dramatically different from the past. And it will be darker, infinitely darker. We are *not* living in the dawn of a golden era for materialistic man, as the starry-eyed theologians have been promising for years. We are headed for world-wide disaster—and we deduce this not alone from Bible prophecy, but from world events themselves. How hopelessly disoriented we are as a nation and as a world. We are on a one-way street that has no outlet. In the midst of national and international consternation, there is but one intelligent

explanation for present conditions and for the cataclysm toward which our nation and all others are headed, and that explanation is found in Bible prophecy. There is no other answer or solution.

Consider with me now the *spiritual crisis* through which our world is now passing. Despite the unprecedented missionary efforts of the past century, a realistic appraisal forces us to the conclusion that the proclamation of the Gospel is not keeping up with the population explosion, nor even overcoming the opposition engendered by the nationalistic spirit of small nations, and the inroads of Communism. In fact, Communism is outstripping the Church in converts a thousand to one. Even here in the United States—a nation wont to call itself Christian—the teachings of the Bible have no realistic application to the vast majority. Christianity in recent years has not materially influenced our national policies in politics, business, or the field of education.

The truth is, the Christian faith is anything but a dominant influence in any nation. It is apparent that any effort to further the Christian faith, however energetically pursued or enthusiastically prosecuted, is destined to fall far short of any realistic goal. Let's face it! We are up to our eyebrows in an age in which most people do not know the facts about Jesus Christ, and don't care to know them. This must not lessen our evangelistic efforts, but we must not ignore the handwriting on the wall. Converts are coming today in singles. They are plucked as *individual* brands from the burning.

Added to this rising impotence is a wholesale abandonment of theological orthodoxy. On every hand there is a widespread denial and rejection of the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, which has left the human race in the position of a ship with-

out a rudder or anchor. Let's face it: the educated people of the world have not turned, and are not turning, to the Bible as the Word of God. They do not believe it contains the norm for human behavior. Man has once again, after repeated disaster all through history, undertaken the impossible task of defining and proclaiming infinite truth apart from divine revelation. Churches and educational institutions which stand on the fundamental doctrines of the Bible are an evident minority in the great mass of contemporary Christendom.

I am often asked by those who are becoming disenchanted with the liberal trend in their denominations if they should "stick with the ship" and wield whatever good influence they can, hopeful of getting it back on the track. My answer is always the same: There is no hope of the doctrine of the inerrant Word of God being restored when once lost. We are dealing with a brainwashed clergy. The protests of a few conservative hold-outs do not influence them. Organized Christianity today is, I repeat, a ship without rudder or anchor. It is at the mercy of the winds of chance; it is bound for no certain port. The ultimate end can only be disaster for all who put their trust in it.

And what is to be said about the *moral crisis* now faced by the entire world? What we see is the direct result of the spiritual vacuum created by an apostate church. Agree or not, history has never seen an organized defiance of Bible ethics such as we are now witnessing. Liberal theology has spawned the "New Morality." Hitherto we have assumed an absence of morals in heathendom, but now we see immorality deliberately perpetrated among the cultured, educated and liberated peoples of the world! Even in lands where Christianity has

been widely taught, such as England and the United States, to name but two, the basic morality of honesty and decency, the sanctity of marriage and the home and all related ethical standards have been all but abolished. Not only has society abandoned itself to every moral vice of which depravity is capable, but with it has come a defiance of convention and the oburgation of all who propose a return to decency. This is just one more factor signalling the imminence of divine judgment which the Scriptures so clearly predict.

Tomorrow I shall cite additional crises that portend the certain destruction of the nonbelieving world and the inescapable judgment of Him who sits in the heavens; but by way of summary let me say that we are now seeing enacted before our very eyes (and how quickly it has developed!) the fulfillment of many dramatic prophecies set forth in the Word of God. All during my adult life I have read and heard the rosy predictions of liberal clergymen concerning the approach of "a new day," a "golden era," a day of spiritual perception, and the establishment *by man* of a kingdom of righteousness. But all the while I, and others who put their trust in the Word of God, have said that no such day is coming—*until man's cup of iniquity first overflows and God's wrath falls upon the ungodly!* And so, as ministers by the thousands have turned from the Bible's message of redemption to a program of social and civic betterment, the cup of man's sin has filled inexorably with human vice and iniquity. Now it is spilling over the top, and the death knell of millions is sounding.

I plead for a concentration of effort toward reaching man's *soul*—not trying to make his temporal life more pleasant. The Bible says we are only

pilgrims on our way to our homeland. But our religious leaders won't believe it. They prefer to take things in their own hands. And so, in abandoning the Bible, they have made themselves the laughing stock of those who behold their impotence in the world's most crucial hour.

The Bible stands! All it predicts is coming true. We must prepare *now* for cataclysmic conditions as the Great Tribulation bears down upon us.

Only those who know *Jesus Christ* as Savior are safe!

The Future

PART II

Undoubtedly the immorality of our day is the bitter fruit of departure from the Word of God. And what is of tremendous import is the fact that there is little indication that anyone cares, or is interested in the way back. To the mind of the Bible scholar, this is a definite fulfillment of Bible prophecies having to do with the end of time. (Read II Tim. chapter 3.)

We are all well aware that the present moral crisis has precipitated a *racial crisis* that has turned our nation, in fact the whole world, into a seething inferno of hatreds. Do you know that the anti-semitism in the Middle East, that so recently erupted into full-scale war, is a matter of major significance from a Biblical standpoint? The people of Israel, whom God has restored to their ancient land, are a thorn in the side of their Arab neighbors, effecting major tensions in that pivotal area of the world.

Even more serious, at least to our own nation, is the recent outbreak of racial violence in our cities. Some insist this is only resistance to the white man's lack of interest in the welfare of his black brothers, but competent observers believe the seething unrest goes much deeper. There is doubtless powerful Communist influence inciting to riot. The fact that some of the looting has been done by people driv-

ing 1967 automobiles is proof that poverty is not the sole issue. There may be frustration, but there is also a spirit of *lawlessness* unprecedented in the history of this nation.

Of course the United States is not the only center of racial tension and violence. It is a world-wide sickness. It is, I believe, the prelude to the consummation of this age; a period characterized by the "raging" of the nations, as predicted in Psalms 2:1-3: "Why do the nations make a tumult and the people devise an empty scheme? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers consult together against the Lord and His anointed, saying, 'Let us tear their restraining bands apart, and let us cast their shackles from us.'" (Berkley).

In essence, this is what the peoples of the world are doing—tearing apart the restraining bands and clamoring for the so-called "shackles" of convention and traditional morality to be cast aside. A perfect description of our day; a perfect prediction.

Added to the racial tumult is the *scientific crisis*, the shrinking of the earth by rapid communication and transportation and the ability of despotic men, by means of nuclear weapons, to destroy or control. Many wonder why our nation is spending billions on "the space race", getting a man on the moon. To many minds this is sheer insanity, but they are wrong. It is sheer fright! The space race epitomizes the frantic efforts of terrified nations to beat other nations to a breakthrough that could catapult them into a position of power over the entire world. You must know that both the United States and Russia are now potentially able to loft nuclear weapons in orbit around the earth and destroy one another by means of a pushbutton conflict. And by the way, nuclear treaties are worth-

less. They may represent noble efforts to ward off a coming holocaust, but they are at best only deterrents. The archives of history are strewn with treaties, pacts, promises, guarantees, all drawn up in the hope of forestalling or outlawing aggression. But we are not ignorant of history. We know what happens to peace pacts when a power-hungry nation decides conditions are ripe for conquest.

It is significant to note that the many portrayals of the final world conflict in the prophetic Scriptures demand a type of sophisticated weaponry wholly unknown to those who lived in the days in which they were set forth. Let it be remembered that up to the time the very last prophecies were recorded, the most potent weapons known to man were arrows, swords and battering rams. The swiftest mode of transport was the horse-drawn chariot. Yet the Bible describes a coming conflict in which vast numbers of people will be destroyed by fire and sulphur and smoke (this before the days of gunpowder and nuclear weapons), and destruction so vast a third of all mankind is to be destroyed in one great cataclysmic event. The Bible describes a future conflict on the hills of Palestine in which destruction and bloodshed will be so great the nation of Israel will be seven months just locating and burying the dead of her adversaries (Ezek. 39:12-15), and seven years using up for fuel the captured weapons of the enemy (Ezek. 39:9).

Of course Ezekiel describes the weapons in the only language with which he was familiar in anticipating modern weapons. So he speaks of Israel gathering and burning battle gear which he portrays as "shields and bucklers," "bows and arrows," "hand-spikes," "riding whips" and "spears." These were the weapons of warfare with which Ezekiel

was familiar, so he could be expected to use terms comprehensible to his contemporaries. (Imagine the consternation among Bible readers during the past centuries if he spoke of tanks, planes, half-tracks, hydrogen bombs, etc!) But so vast will be the destruction of the weapons of the attacking forces, Israel will have fuel for her homes and industries for *seven years* from the salvage!

I am indebted to one of my listeners for the following excerpt from the BIBLICAL RESEARCH MONTHLY of November, 1966:

"It is reported that Russia has an abundance of nuclear weapons and has tactical warheads which are designed to be carried along by its invading army for use right on the field. These are fired from tanks, field cannon, mortars, and even bazookas. If and when Russia carries out a large-scale invasion . . . it will send a supply of these field weapons along with its army, even if it hopes not to be forced to use them.

"Hence when Russia's hordes invade Israel and are destroyed by God's catastrophic judgment, there would be an abundance of atomic warheads for Israel to gather. And since it is a recognized fact today . . . that atomic reactors can supply all the fuel needs for a small country, even to the heating of homes, the Israelis can take the uranium from the Russian reactors and 'reshape it into rods' for their own atomic reactors, and thus will not need a fuel supply from any other source for about seven years."

The article then goes on to ask why *seven years* — then ventures this answer:

"Scientists originally thought that the reactors would continue to function for hundreds of

years. In practice, however, it has been found that reactor cores become poisoned with a by-product of the atomic fission—a gas known as xenon. This covers the surface of the rods and gradually ‘extinguishes’ the atomic fire by absorbing the flux of neutrons upon which the fission process depends. This is why our atomic-powered submarines . . . must be serviced every seven years or so.”

The article adds this pertinent observation:

“Ezekiel knew nothing about atomic weapons and reactors when he wrote that ‘Israel shall set on fire and burn the weapons . . . with fire seven years,’ using no other fuel resources meanwhile. *But*—thus saith the Lord God! (Ezek. 39:9, 10).

The foregoing are but some of the things that are leading many who have confidence in Bible prophecy to think that *our own generation* may witness the dramatic close of the “times of the Gentiles” and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven upon the earth, thus bringing to fulfillment one of the great themes of prophecy—the divine program for all the nations of the world!

To which the Christian echoes the prayer of John the Revelator, “Even so, come Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20b).

